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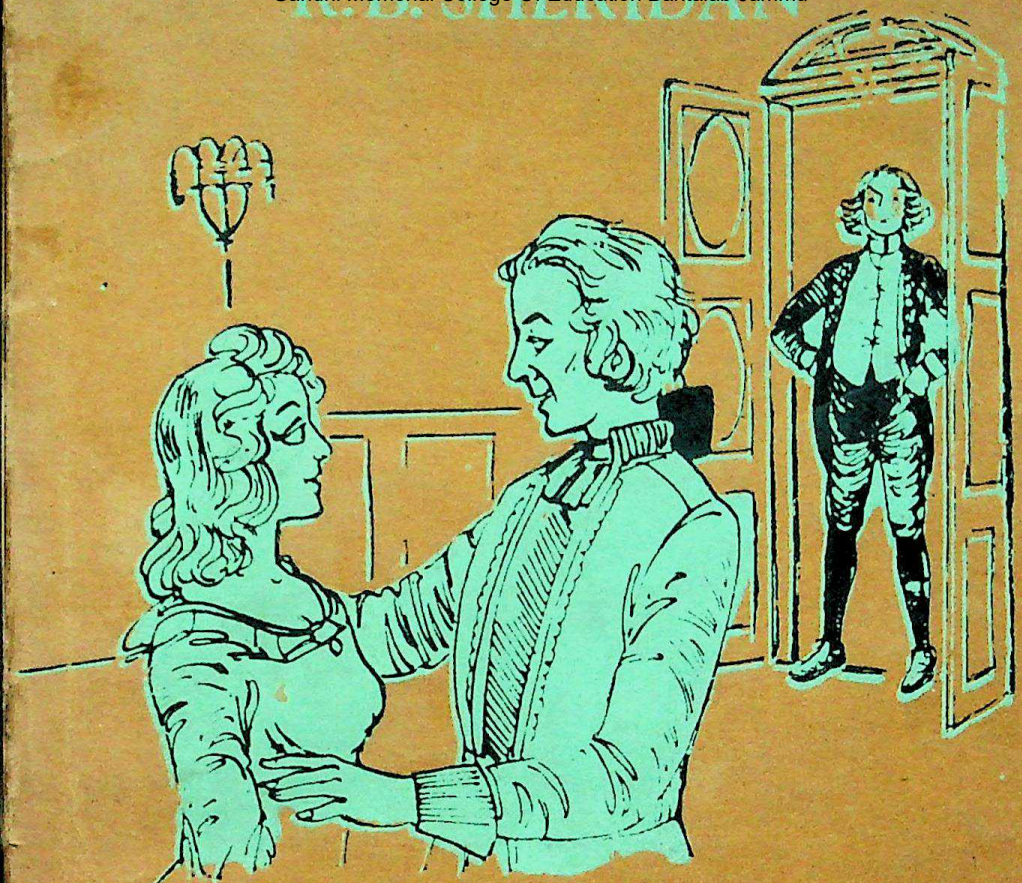

The School for Scandal

B. P. Chaudhuri

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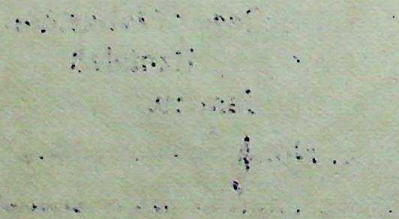

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Raipur, Bantalab
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THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

By

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Department of English

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University of Delhi

Delhi

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

It is a matter of great pleasure that the Fourth Edition of this book on *The School for Scandal* is being released herewith in the hands of its esteemed readers. The all-round appreciation received from teachers and students of English Literature alike for the Third Edition and the insistent demand for further supply of copies have encouraged us to bring out this Fourth Edition. While bringing out the Fourth Edition, every care has been taken to retain the same usefulness and purpose as were set out for its predecessors.

We take this opportunity to thank the student community for their warm appreciation of the earlier editions of this book, and it is hoped that the Fourth Edition in its present form and get-up will prove still more useful to those for whom it is meant.

New Delhi
October 1982 **Publishers**

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Students in India find Sheridan a very interesting dramatist. But unfortunately they find very little critical material on the dramatist available to them. The situation makes it difficult for a thorough understanding and comprehension of Sheridan's plays. In this present edition of Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, I have endeavoured to present to our students the best and most up-to-date criticism of the play along with passages of critical essays and view-points. It is hoped that our University students will find this book very useful. The paraphrase of the original text will help students to grasp the meaning of the play easily and the chapter on "Selected Critical Questions With Answers" will guide how best the questions could be attempted with the materials given.

Finally I would like to express my grateful thanks to the publishers, Messrs Aarti Book Centre, for bringing out this book so successfully.

New Delhi
October 1974

B. P. CHAUDHURI

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Or

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8. "Sheridan's characters appeared under different names in many plays since the Restoration." Do you find any individuality in Sheridan's character-portrayal ? Discuss with particular reference to the major characters in *The School for Scandal.* 301

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Or

22. What is the underlying point in the theme of *The School for Scandal* ?

Or

23. Point out how the two plots of *The School for Scandal* are linked together.

Or

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1

Life and Works of R. B. Sheridan

At School

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin in 1751, and at the age of seven was sent to a schoolmaster, Samuel Whyte, with the recommendation from his mother that he was an impenetrable dunce. At eleven Sheridan was sent to Harrow, where according to Dr. Parr, the Headmaster, his answers to any common question were prompt and accurate. Somehow or other he gained the admiration of all his school-fellows ; he also kept an extensive apple-loft which he obliged the junior boys to furnish.

His Affairs and Marriage

While he was at Harrow, Sheridan's mother died, and soon afterwards his father settled at Bath. Here Sheridan became acquainted with a celebrated singer, Miss Linley, The Maid of Bath. Miss Linley had already been admired by Mr. Long, an old gentleman of considerable wealth, Informed by the lady that she could never love him, Mr. Long not only took upon himself the whole blame for their engagement being broken off, but forestalled an action for breach of promise threatened by Mr. Linley, the lady's father, by settling upon her the sum of £3000. Miss Linley was now pestered with the attentions, of a Captain Matthews, who was already married. To save her from this annoyance, Sheridan escorted Miss Linley to a nunnery in France. Captain Matthews inserted in the Bath Chronicle insinuations with regard to the disappearance of the young couple, whereupon Sheridan returned promptly from France and fought a duel with Matthews in Hyde Park. Rushing in prematurely on Matthews's guard Sheridan extracted an apology—subsequently inserted in the Bath Chronicle—at the point of the sword. Matthews retired disgruntled to his estate in Wales, where an Irish friend incited him to a second encounter with Sheridan to retrieve his honour. The night before the second duel, which was fought at Bath, Sheridan invited Matthews to supper with him. Sheridan drank deep till the hour of appointment, and then proceeded, to totter down Milsom Street. Coming upon Matthew's chaise, which was waiting for its owner, he reeled into it with his seconds, and ordered the driver to take them to the ground, leaving Matthews to follow in a borrowed vehicle. During the duel, which was as violent as it was unskilful, Matthews disarmed Sheridan and directed him to beg for his life. "No, by God,

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I won't." said Sheridan. The seconds intervened. Matthews disappeared to London, and Sheridan was driven back to Bath in a chaise. The matter was reported to Miss Linley, who electrified the nunnery by exclaiming "My husband ! My husband !" whereupon it was revealed that during their expedition she and Sheridan had secretly undergone the marriage ceremony.

Settled in London

The marriage having been made public, Sheridan, who had no income, purchased a London house out of £3000 bestowed upon his wife by Mr. Long, furnished it lavishly, and proceeded to entertain fashionable society with all the extravagance and fascination of Charles Surface, and with no more resources. Many stories are told of angry creditors calling upon Sheridan, who would welcome them in his drawing-room, immaculately clad, beg them to share a bottle of the best wine with him, charm them by the wit of his conversation, and send them away exchanging many mutual compliments and almost oblivious of their mission. Servants would starve in his service rather than leave him, and there are descriptions of Sheridan being driven about in a fine coach, for which he had not paid, by a devoted coachman who had received no wages.

His First Comedy

Sheridan would not allow his wife to labour for him by continuing any longer as a singer, but resolved to support her by his successful pen. In the January of 1775 his first comedy, *The Rivals*, was produced at Covent Garden.

Other Comedies

In the same year as *The Rivals*, Sheridan's farce, *St. Patrick's Day* or *The Scheming Lieutenant*, was produced. In November of the same year, in conjunction with Linley, his father-in-law, who superintended the music, Sheridan produced the comic opera, *The Duenna*, which ran for seventy-five nights at Covent Garden. In 1776 Sheridan, with the help of his father-in-law and another friend, purchased Garrick's share in Drury Lane, and a few years later bought the complete ownership of the theatre. At Drury Lane in February 1777 he produced *A Trip to Scarborough*, a bowdlerized adpatation which he had made of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, but this proved a failure. In May 1777, after some conflict with the Lord Chamberlain, he produced *The School for Scandal*, which was enthusiastically received and brought considerable prosperity to Drury Lane. *The Critic* was produced in 1779, and Sheridan's last play, *Pizarro*, a tragedy, in 1799.

In Politics

In 1780 Sheridan determined to enter politics and was elected to Parliament as member for Stafford. He entertained the voting population of Stafford so lavishly before his election that he had to devote his first speech in Parliament to defending himself against the

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charge of bribery. He joined the Opposition under Burke and Fox, opposed the American War, and when Lord North's Ministry resigned in 1782 became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs under Rockingham, and later Secretary to the Treasury under the coalition Ministry of 1783.

His Role in the Impeachment of Hastings

Sheridan found the opportunity of making a considerable parliamentary reputation at the Impeachment of Warren Hastings. When the trial took place in Westminster Hall, Burke, Fox and Sheridan were the accusers. Sheridan delivered three great speeches. in which he exposed the manner in which Hastings had forcibly seized the treasure of the Begums, or Princesses, of Oude, to provide funds for fighting the French in India. When the question of the impeachment was first raised in the House of Commons. Sheridan spoke for five hours and the effect of his oratory was so overwhelming that it was decided to adjourn the voting of the House till the next day, when it might be in more dispassionate temper.

End of His Political Career

Although Sheridan sat in Parliament for thirty-two years, except for an occasional oratorical *tour de force*, such as his powerful speech supporting the suppression of the mutiny at the Nore, his natural indolence prevented him from sustaining his reputation, and his achievement fell short of his ability. Although a close companion of the Prince of Wales, who in 1811 became Prince Regent, Sheridan's parliamentary work was never crowned by any substantial office, and in 1812, when he was defeated at the polls at Westminster, his political career came to an end.

Burning of Drury Lane Theatre

The close of Sheridan's life was one of gloom and poverty. In 1792 his first wife had died, and three years later he married Miss Ogle, daughter of the Dean of Winchester, who survived him. On an evening in February 1809 Drury Lane Theatre, which represented Sheridan's substance, was burnt to the ground, and he was ruined. Sheridan was in the House of Commons when the news of the disaster was brought. The Speaker proposed an adjournment, but Sheridan protested with complete nonchalance against such an interruption. Having eventually arrived at the scene of the catastrophe, he sat down with a friend to watch the conflagration from a neighbouring coffee-house, and ordered a bottle of port, remarking that it was hard if a man could not drink a glass of wine by his own fireside.

Trouble with His Creditors

So long as he was a Member of Parliament Sheridan had been safe against being arrested for debt, but now that this protection no longer covered him his creditors became importunate, and bailiffs took possession of his house when he was lying mortally sick of an

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internal disorder which had for some time threatened him. A sheriff's officer was on the point of arresting the dying man in his bed and carrying him off to prison in his blankets, had not Sheridan's doctor warned him of the responsibility which he would incur if his prisoner should die on the journey.

His Death

Article in the *Morning Post* roused the public to a realization of the situation, and friends hurried to the bedside. Their help was unpunctual and fruitless, and, after fits of shivering on July 7th, 1816, Sheridan fell into a condition of complete exhaustion and died.

Shortly before he became unconscious on his death-bed. Sheridan whispered. "Tell Lady Bessborough that my eyes will look up to the coffin-lid as brightly as ever."

In spite of the painful circumstances of his death, the eyes of Sheridan still sparkle through his brilliant comedies and the numberless gay anecdotes which cluster about his name and shine upon his posterity as brightly as he promised.

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Literary Background

Influence of the French Theatre

A famous attack by the Rev. Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), was an almost inevitable reaction against the licence and often heartless immorality of Restoration comedy. Though Congreve and Vanbrugh defended their kind of drama against the clergyman's pamphlet, Dryden admitted that its reproof had some justice. It did represent the public's view of the theatre. And when Congreve's masterpiece in that genre of comedy, *The Way of The World*, was produced in 1700, its comparative failure showed him that it was no longer to the taste of the audience. During the Restoration period the audience had been largely composed of courtiers, for Charless II, after he returned to England in 1660, had strongly encouraged the theatre. Many courtiers, as a result, used the theatre as a meeting place and commented freely on the play as they were performed, some of them paying to sit on the stage during performances. Some of them, like Sir Charles Sedley, Sir Robert Howard, the Earl of Orrery, the Earl of Rochester, and the Duke of Buckingham, wrote plays themselves ; some gave their fine clothes to actors and actresses. The new drama had been influenced by the French theatre, for which many of the exiles had developed a strong liking. And the playing a women's roles by women had been an indication of the greater freedom women had attained in society, this freedom being marked by a free discussion of relations between the sexes. Restoration comedy was not concerned with morals so much as fine manners. Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707) was probably the last of the Restoration comedies, and it had a humanity lacking in the work of his predecessors. His tendency to move the action of his plays away from the Town is also symptomatic of a change in the interest of the audience.

Middle Class Audience

The taste of the audience changed, then, and so did its nature. From an aristocratic outlook, it shifted to a bourgeois attitude. An audience of middle-class citizens had replaced one of courtiers. It increased in size, and this expansion and the alteration in its social composition—for it became markedly less aristocratic after the turn of the century—altered the nature of the drama written and produced

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for its entertainment. Artistry and wit gave way to sensibility and sentimentality ; and the style of acting changed from rhetorical to rational—it became mannered and unexpressive. The old method of organizing productions (through the actors holding shares in a company) was replaced by the new managers of the theatres, who engaged actors and actresses and paid them salaries.

The Licencing Act of 1737

The Licensing Act of 1737, which was brought in by Walpole after his Government had been satirized by Fielding in his burlesques *The Author's Farce*, *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register*, stipulated that plays should be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for approval fourteen days before they were published. Performances of spoken drama (hence known as the legitimate) were to be restricted to two theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. This act seriously affected the general state of drama in England in the eighteenth century the two patent theatres having to compete with lighter entertainments offered by the minor theatres : spectacles, burlettas and other kinds of display.

Picture-Frame Stage and Lighting

The dramatist was forced to become an entertainer in order to appeal to the new kind of audience. He no longer had a patron to please ; and his new audience was less well educated. He was in the hands of the managers, whose choice of play was vitally important to him. The actors and actresses, too could affect the success or failure of his play, and, until Garrick humanized the style of acting, stereotyped deliveries had marred many a play. The physical conditions of the theatres changed. There was a progress towards the picture frame stage, as lighting improved and the old closeness between actors and audience diminished in the larger theatres that resulted from several extensions and rebuildings.

Sentimentalism Set In

The effect of these changing conditions—social, political, produced in the eighteenth century was to make it, in general terms sentimental. That is to say, definitions were blurred ; and, as cynical immorality left the stage, so did brilliant wit. Pathos, delicacy, refinement, set in. Richard Steele, wrote sentimental comedies, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) being his best work, and Addison wrote *Cato* (1713), a tragedy that sprang from some of the same spirit that animated Steele. Both men were trying to improve society. The new journals, such as the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, were products of a social age ; they brought the new metropolitan attitude to life into the country ; they were striving to educate, to improve, to settle standards of behaviour and taste ; and their audience was the new middle class.

Very Few Successful Play-Wrights

Henry Fielding, who had been revi ving the Restoration genre of

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robustness in his burlesques (of which *Tom Thumb the Great* (1730) was perhaps the most popular) gave his attention to the novel after the Licensing Act of 1737. The plays of Richard Cumberland (1732-1811) and Hugh Kelly (1739-1777) meanwhile gave the public what it wanted and the Lord Chamberlain permitted. Sentimentality prevailed in the work of Mrs. Centlivre and George Lillo, while Colley Cibber, though a writer of comedies, could be both moral and didactic in a heavy way. The plays written by the lesser dramatists of the eighteenth century have been defended by Professor Allardyce Nicoll in his *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, 1750-1800 (1927). But although they are numerous, they have seldom been revived, and the only two dramatists between Farquhar and Wilde who have stood the test of the time are Goldsmith and Sheridan. Their plays are still frequently and successfully produced.

Sheridan and Goldsmith

These two dramatists stand out because of their different approach to comedy ; they were tougher in mind than their contemporaries who wrote sentimental comedy. They delighted in contrasts between appearance and reality, in the exposure of fools and hypocrites, in the quick give-and-take of dialogue, and in amusing, sharply dramatic situations.

Goldsmith

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74) was alarmed by the conditions of the stage in his day and wrote an essay on sentimental comedy to express his fear that too much refinement might banish humour and character from the English stage. He thought that the distinctions between tragedy and comedy were being blurred and broken down, the tragedy proper was being neglected because the popular form of sentimental comedy was, in effect, a spurious kind of tragedy.

His Plays

Goldsmith first tried his own hand at comedy with *The Good-Natured Man* in 1768. It is a play with satiric scenes, and amusing pieces of self exposure ; it is ironic and witty, but the plot was over complicated, and the moral lesson that good nature could be an excuse for weakness and self indulgence was not perhaps sufficiently applicable for the play to have had a vast success. The scenes with bailiffs were, for instance, regarded as low by the audience, which scenes where the hero pretended to the heroine that the bailiffs in his house were visiting acquaintances. (Sheridan was more fortunate with his scenes dealing with money lenders in *The School for Scandal*.) Goldsmith's next play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) was, however, a complete success. He used an unusual plot, based on an experience of his own as a Schoolboy ; he also created an unusual character in Tony Lumpkin, and he carried his plot along with great dash past its improbabilities, balancing farce and comic wit with skill and all his own brand of affectionate regard for anticlimax and the absurd.

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Sheridan's Contribution

If Goldsmith's sense of fun and farce went back to the Elizabethans, Sheridan's stemmed from the traditions of Restoration wit. He disliked the current conventions of comedy as much as Goldsmith did, and when *The Rivals* was successful on its second production he put in a new prologue giving his views of comedy and casting ridicule on the Sentimental Muse.

Goldsmith wrote to amuse ; so did Sheridan. But Sheridan had more wit and satire in his approach to comedy than Goldsmith. We can see, however, the extent of Sheridan's dislike of sentimental comedy in his play *The Critic* (inspired by Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*. He regarded this kind of writing as insipid and mocked Cumberland, who had contributed many plays to the contemporary stage, in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary (he also attacked the critics of the time in the characters of Puff and Sneer). This literary parody is an attack on the often crude dramatic techniques in use: the clumsy ways in which information was given to the audience ; the unsophisticated resolving of plots ; the melodramatic methods of highlighting particular moments of tension (eighteenth century dramatists used, for instance, soft music to usher in the heroine) ; the dull, often, monosyllabic, dialogue ; the cliches ; the artificial devices ; the asides.

Critical Comment on Society in Sheridan's Time

"Moral considerations apart, no more desirable lot can well be imagined for a human being than that he should be included in the ranks of a highly civilized aristocracy at the culminating moment of its vigour. A society, so broad and strongly based that within its own borders, it can safely permit absolute liberty of thought and speech whose members are so numerous that they are able to—believe, with some show of reason, that the interests of the state are identical with their own, and at the same time so privileged that they are sure to get the best of everything which is to be had ; is a society uniting, as far as those members are concerned, most of the advantages, and all the attractions, both of a popular and an oligarchical form of government. It is in such societies that existence has been enjoyed most keenly, and that looks have been written which communicate a sense of that enjoyment most vividly to posterity. The records of other periods may do more to illustrate the working of political forces and to clear up the problems of historical science ; the literature of other periods may be richer in wealth of thought, and nobler depth of feeling ; but a student who loves to dwell upon times when men lived so intensely, and wrote so joyously, that their past seems to us as our present, will never tire of recurring to the Athens of Alcibiades and Aristophanes, the Rome of Mark Antony and Cicero, and the London of Charles Townshend and Horace Walpole. The special charm of the literature produced in communities so

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constituted is that in those communities, and in those alone personal allusion, the most effective weapon in the armoury of letters, can be employed with a certainty of success. A few thousand people who thought that the world was made for them, and that all outside their own fraternity were unworthy of notice or criticism, bestowed upon each other an amount of attention quite inconceivable to us who count our equals by millions. The actions, the fortunes, and the peculiarities of every one, who belonged to the ruling class, became matters of such importance to his fellows that satire and gossip were elevated into branches of the highest literary art. Every hit in an Athenian burlesque was recognized on the instant by every individual in an audience which comprised the whole body of free born citizens. The names and habits of every parasite, and informer, and legacy hunter within the circuit of the seven hills were accurately known to every Roman who had enough spare sesterces to purchase a manuscript of Juvenal. In the eighteenth century, in our own country the same causes produced the same results : and the flavour of the immortal impertinences which, two thousand years before, were directed against Pericles and Euripides, may be recognized in the letters which, when George the Third was young, were handed about among a knot of men of fashion and family who could never have enough of discussing the characters and ambitions, the incomes and genealogies, the scrapes and the gallantries, of everybody who had admission to the circle within which their lives were passed.

The society pictured in these letters had much the same relation to what is called good society now, that the Boar Hunt by Valesquez in the National Gallery, with its groups of stately cavaliers, courteous to each other, and unmindful of all beside, bears to the scene of confused bustle and dubious enjoyment represented in the Derby Day of Mr. Frith. So far from being a vast and ill defined region, capable of almost infinite expansion,—into which anybody can work his way who has a little money and a great deal of leisure, and who is willing to invest his industry in the undertaking,—good society, when Lord Chesterfield was its oracle, and George Selwyn its father Confessor, was enclosed within ascertained and narrow boundaries. The extent of all those who were excluded, that a great lady, when she gave an evening party, would content herself with sending cards to the women, while she left the men to judge for themselves whether they had a right to come, or not. Within the charmed precincts there prevailed an easy and natural mode of intercourse which in some respects must have been singularly delightful. Secure of his own position, and with no desire to contest the social claims of others, a man was satisfied, and sometimes only too easily satisfied, to show himself exactly as he was. There was no use in trying to impose upon people who had been his school-fellows at Eton, his brother-officers in the Guards, his colleagues in Parliament, his partners at whist, his cronies at the club, his companions in a hundred revels. Every friend with whom he lived was acquainted with every circumstances in his career, and every turn in his affairs ;—who had jilted him, and who had schemed for him ; how many thousands a year had been allowed him by his father, and how many hundreds he

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allowed his son ; how much of his rent roll was unmortgaged, and how much wood was left uncut in his plantations ; what chance he had at getting heard at two in the morning in the House of Commons, and what influence he possessed over the corporation of his neighbouring borough. Unable to dazzle those for whose good opinion he cared, it only remained for him to amuse them ; and the light and elegant effusions in which the fine gentlemen of White's and Arthur's rivalled and, as some think, excelled, the wittiest pens of France, remain to prove of what Englishmen are capable when they devote the best of their energy to the business of being frivolous."

(G. O. Trevelyan : *The Early History of Charles James Fox*)

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3

Theatre in the Eighteenth Century

Falling Standard

When *The School for Scandal* was produced Shakespeare had been dead exactly 161 years. Tragedy in Sheridan's days was still poetical, though the glories of the Elizabethan stage had long departed. Dryden talks of "the exactest rules by which a play is wrought" and, bound in the straight-waist-coat of rule, plays in his time were artificial and uninspiring. Rhyme had replaced the blank verse of Shakespeare's age and little or no interest was taken in characterization. In the eighteenth century a reaction set in: Shakespeare recovered his popularity; and blank verse was once more accepted as the vehicle for tragedy. The language became exaggerated and the plots romantic and sentimental with the result that popular tragedies of the day were more like melodrama than pure tragedy. Such a play, for instance, is Home's *Douglas* which was the butt of some of the mockery in *The Critic*, and which provided the schools and classrooms of nineteenth century England with very popular speech for purposes of repetition. Various explanations may be given for this "pseudo romantic" tragedy: it was an age of sensibility: audiences reacting from the moral laxity of Restoration times demanded what Mrs. Dangle calls "edification"; the status of actors had risen and they were, at any rate if they possessed the prestige of a carrick, in a position to exact from the playwright speeches that would enable them to make parade of their skill in declamation; and lastly the standard of taste was deplorably low. It must not of course be supposed that plays like *Douglas* or Jephsons *Braganza* or Brooke's *Gustavus Vasa*—to name three generally accepted as being satirized in *The Critic*—are as absurd as *The Critic* would suggest; but yet it is possible to judge from *The Critic* something of the flowery language and lack of simplicity, and of the rigid adherence to convention that marred even the best of the tragedies of Sheridan's time. In one other respect the advance of stage technique influenced the spirit of the drama: in the middle of the eighteenth century the stage was separated from the auditorium and a play became somewhat of a spectacle, especially after the introduction of elaborate stage scenery; Dr. Allardyce Nicoll (*Drama in the Eighteenth Century*) quotes a restoration of the Tower of London made for the performance of Richard III in 1794 as a particularly elaborate piece of stagecraft, and even Dangle finds.

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cause for admiration in Puff's representation of Tilbury Fort—"very fine indeed". When the success of a play depends on the skill of the actors and stage-carpenters, the art of the playwright becomes a secondary consideration.

State of Comedy

While tragedy was still paying lip service to *Hamlet* and *Richard III*, Comedy had broken entirely with the romantic comedy exemplified by *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. Its model was Moliere, and Moliere was the greatest of all writers of the Comedy of Manners.

Comedy of Manners and Moliere

The Comedy of Manners was introduced into England by Congreve and Wycherley at the end of the seventeenth century but neither was the equal of Moliere. Moliere's characters are types rather than individuals and the plays interest by reason of the skilful delineation of the characters, the brilliant and witty conversation, and the picture which they give of society. In a play called the *Criticism of the School for Wives* (*La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*) Moliere has some interesting things to say about the objective of his comedies. "Satires like this" he says, "aim directly at manners and strike individuals only by rebound" ; and again, "Everybody should look at the absurd conceptions staged in the theatre without being annoyed : they are public mirrors where we ought never to admit that see out own reflexions." Congreve's best play, *The Way of the World*, was published in 1700 ; two years earlier Jeremy Collier had issued his attack on the stage of his time and protested against the entire disregard of any moral standard by the authors. As a result, "sentimental" comedy, sometimes called the comedy of "good feeling," took its rise. It has been described as "the deliberately pathetic treatment of a moral sentiment."

Goldsmith's Essay

Goldsmith wrote an essay on it in which he says, "almost all the characters are good and exceedingly generous ; they are lavish enough of their tin money on the stage ; and though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught, not only to pardon but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts ; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended." This essay was written in 1773, four years before the production of *The School for Scandal*, and Goldsmith himself was one of the first to endeavour to write comedies which returned to the earlier comedy of manners, refined however by the higher standard of public moral : *The Good Natured Man* was produced in 1768 and *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1773. But these plays never quite threw off the influence of the sentimental drama ; the audiences of fine ladies and gentlemen

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had no objection to seeing their follies represented as in a mirror, but they did not desire nor expect to see the disastrous consequences of those follies; so that the foolish escape the results of their folly, for the audience has the last word. *The School for Scandal* is plainly comedy of manners, and sentiment, in the person of Joseph Surface is equally plainly ridiculed; though Sheridan is of all our writers of comedy nearest to Moliere, even he lets Lady Teazle and Charles and Joseph off very lightly indeed. Sheridan's play led the way to the "domestic" comedy of our own times.

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4

The Audience

Audience Reflected in the Plays

The men and women of Sheridan's time—or, rather the upper classes that patronized Drury Lane and Covent Garden—liked seeing themselves depicted on the stage, and an intelligent reader will have realized the salient weaknesses of eighteenth century London society by the time he has finished reading *The School for Scandal* and *The Critic*. It may be as well, however, to sum up briefly what the life of the idle rich was like. It may help the reader to visualize the scenes.

The Fashionable World

In 1763 Horace Walpole penned a bitterly sarcastic picture of the gentleman's year: The beginning of October 1, is certain that everybody will be at New market and the Duke of Cumberland will lose and Shafto win two or three thousand pounds....The Parliament opens and everybody is bribed; and the new establishment is perceived to be composed of adamant. November passes with two or three self murders and a new play. Christmas arrives: every body goes out of town and a riot happens in one of the theatres The opposition languishes: balls and assemblies begin...Ranelagh opens and Vauxhall: one produces a scandal and the other a drunken quarrel. People separate some to Tunbridge and some to all the horse races in England. By the time that *The School for Scandal* was written, some changes fashion had brought: constant and repeated intercourse with their opposite numbers in Paris had added airs and graces and particularly the art—which was the glory of the Salons—the art of conversation, with its opportunities for the display of wit and the dissemination of scandals; the Pantheon had joined Ranelagh as a society resort; gambling had reached monstrous heights—Lord Ilchester lost £13,000 at a sitting and Fox's gambling debts were estimated at £100,000. A Frenchman named Coyer, describing these people to his fellow countrymen in 1779 said of the ladies that toilettee, gallantry, play, balls and spectacles absorbed all their time and Walpole confirms it three years later by writing time and Walpole confirms in three years later by writing Gallantry in this country scorns a mask. Maids only intrigue, wives elope. As for their costumes, fashionable headgear on full dress occasions reached the height of absurdity.

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A French Lady describes in her diary a dress intended for a visit to the play—a hooped skirt covered with twinning roses in silver foil and a bodice trimmed with lace, flowers and pearls and crowned of course by the immense headress. Men's attire was tending to greater simplicity, however; they ceased to wear swords and it created a tremendous sensation when Fitzpatrick, one of the arbiters of fashion, appeared at the play with no powder on his hair. Clothes of men were less magnificent than they had been and a duller colour was affected.

The French Influence

But Paris had other lessons, less desirable still, to teach London. Laxity in the observance of marriage vows, excessive wine drinking the imports of French wines was multiplied six times in the course of half a dozen years instead of the traditional English ale, extravagant expenditure on luxuries, even the imitation of masters by their valets, of which Trip is an exemplar, are all effects of the influence of France, which swept the ranks of English society as relentlessly as its own mistral. Voltaire once described the English as like a hogshead of beer, the top of which was froth, the middle excellent and injustice to our eighteenth century ancestors it should be pointed out that the characters that strut the boards in Sheridan's plays, and the audience that witnessed them, do not belong to the middle but to the froth.

Affectation of Speech

A few words about their language. The desire for airs and graces led to much affectation in speech, both in the choice of words and in the pronunciation. At the beginning of Act V. Sec. 3 Lady Sneerwell says "Oh! I was a fool, an idiot..." now Moore's edition of 1821 prints the last word *ideot* but practically all modern editions spell the word in the modern way. In the eighteenth century affected pronunciations led to affected spelling, and *ideot* is probably as much the true reading as the curious spelling of because that you can find in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*—bekeays: both attempt to suggest the contemporary pronunciation. The use of adverbs of exaggeration—vastly, prodigious, monstrous, the popularity of French and Italian phrases with which speech was constantly interlarded, and odd references to Indian and Chinese products, the use of strange oaths and literary allusions, and unpleasant abbreviations like *poz* all spring from that affected elegance which is one of the visible signs of French influence. Like Lady Wormwood the smart set of the time delighted in putting much salt and pepper in their prattle and Sheridan—that *cavaliero true* offers his audience the most elegant examples of the diction they strove to acquire.

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5

The New Comedy of the Age

French Model From Moliere

Comedy—as Meredith said—creates thoughtful laughter, the laughter that does not end with itself, but suggests trains of thought in the mind and leads to certain conclusions. How to treat grave subjects and devise complex characters, and yet retain the comic framework, is Moliere's own secret, and it has been shared by very few among his fellow dramatist. In his case it was the ripe fruit of years of work. Abundance of laughter could be extracted from the valets who were the heritage to him of the Latin stage ; abundant laughter also from the serving maids, the clever and sharp tongued *soubrettes*, who were in especial Moliere's invention ; abundant laughter also could be created by the traditional types of character—the fool, the braggart the stupid, lover, the empty headed pedagogue. But now, slowly downs before Moliere's find a larger task. The play ought to arise from the clash of character with character. It ought to follow naturally the relations exhibited between the different personages. The characters themselves need not be of a conventional type ; though typical, they must be real and human. They must be such characters as we are able to meet every day, easily recognized, well marked in their characteristics, and rounded figures, so to speak, complex beings so essentially human that we can laugh at and with them, and even forgive them where they go wrong. Moreover—and, perhaps, that is no slight advance—the scene must be laid within a single family, whether of bourgeois or of aristocrats, and the plot must be unrolled before our eyes withing the four corners of an ordinary sitting room. No longer are we to have a public square, flanked by the houses in which the principal personages live It must be just an ordinary interior, the living room of a family. This is what Moliere did in the *Tartuff* and in his *Misanthrope*, and in the *Femmes Savantes*, three high specimens of his dramatic skill. And thereby he created the ideal type of comedy, the comedy, as we say, of character, the comedy which tremoles on the edge of tragedy and pathos, like all the real things of life where tears follow hard on laughter. To us, because we live after the event, it may seem an easy achievement. Perhaps Menander may have done something of the same kind in the later Attic comedy. Indeed, without any manner of doubt, so far as we can discover from recently unearthed evidences of his art, this is what Menander did.

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But for us in a modern world it is the great achievement of Moliere, marking a notable advance on Shakespeare's comedies and illustrating the evolution of comedy from the grotesquely humorous or the fantastically humorous to the humour of real characters, the humour of life itself. And if we want to see why it was a great discovery, we need only observe how the later comedians follow in Moliere's footsteps. Here precisely is the comedy which Sheridan wrote in *The School for Scandal* ; here is the comedy of Dumas and Augier. Here, too, is the comedy of Ibsen.

Sheridan's Humour Comedy

In *The Rivals*, the very names, of the *dramatis personage* suggest their kinship with humour comedy. The accentuation of individual traits of character is, however, not confined to names like Languish, Malaprop, O'Trigger, Absolute, Acres, Fag. Faulkland's humour is unreasonable jealousy, as clearly as that of Sir Lucius O'Trigger's love of fighting. Furthermore, *The Rivals* introduces two highly developed artificial humours in the Oath referential, or sentimental swearing of Bob Acres, and in Mrs. Malaprop's nice derangement of epithets. Like Dickens, Sheridan often outlines characters with broad strokes that suggest caricature. While aspersions may be cast upon her parts of speech, Mrs. Malaprop remains, among a host of dramatic predecessors and imitators, the unrivalled queen of dictionary. Doubtless Sheridan lacks subtlety in the analysis of character, but he has an exceptional sense of theatrical effectiveness. The courage of Bob Acres dwindles to the vanishing point when he feels his valour oozing out as it were at the palms of his hands, but the very exaggeration of cowardice enhances the acting possibility of the duel scene. The passion of Sir Anthony Absolute mounts to sheer hyperbole, but heightens the dramatic climax of the quarrel scene with his son. If there are suggestions of farcical exaggerations and unrestraint in Sheridan's delineation of character, he has, at least, extraordinary mastery of effective dramatic art.

Comedy in The Rivals

The art of heightening by contrast the comic aspects of character has rarely been exhibited more amusingly than in the conversations of Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres with the others, or more frequently in the dialogues between Captain Absolute and his father Sir Anthony. Both Acres and Mrs. Malaprop are doubtless caricatures but they are the work of genius. The coward reluctantly engaged in a duel is one of the oft-repeated situations of the stage, but nowhere worked out so effectively as here. Every bit of the elaboration counts,—his boorish gaiety that irks the sombre Faulkland, his dressing, his learning to dance, his confidences with his servants, the challenge, and all the complications of the duel. At every moment his follies shine in contrast to the absurdities of others, especially to the ebullient pugnacity of Sir Lucius. Like Bob Acres, Mrs. Malaprop has a great stage part and is always presented in

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dramatic contrast with other persons, but she would be magnificent even alone in the monologue.

The School for Scandal

In *The School for Scandal* Sheridan has given his characters sufficient vitality so that the complications of the action seem to spring from their disposition. He has added minor characters, Snake the accomplice, Moses the Jew, and Mrs. Candour, a stroke of genius. In fact Sheridan has made all the characters abnormal in order to make them more effective on the stage. There are a choleric old husband and a sprightly young wife, two brothers, one a hypocrite who passes as a model of virtue, the other a spendthrift with a warmheart, a long-absent rich uncle who returns from abroad to test his nephews, an intriguing widow and a sweet young heiress.

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6

Sentimentalism in Sheridan's Day

Sentimental Approach to Human Literature

Sentimentalism in drama involved a reversal of the assumption that the golden mean was always the sound approach. Instead, behaviour was to be judged by the heart, and not the head. It can be argued that out of eighteenth-century sentimentalism came nineteenth-century humanism, and out of that grew the attitudes, by whatever name known, that make us, in our age, attempt to improve the lot of humanity everywhere, even if not always with the success we might wish.

The sentimental approach to human nature was not peculiar to drama. Basic to the sentimental approach was the idea of the innate goodness of man. This idea appeared in all literary forms. It might be associated, for convenience, with Rousseau or with the English philosopher Shaftesbury. Sterne's Tristram Shandy was a sentimental novel of deliberately confused structure that somehow managed to combine a maximum of ribaldry with a maximum of compassion. Sterne followed with Sentimental Journey and Mackenzie followed with a *A Man of Feeling.* Jane Austen, generally disapproving, held sentimentalism up for examination in *Pride and Prejudice* and, more obviously, in *Sense and Sensibility.*

CHARACTERISTICS OF SENTIMENTALISM

Sentimentalism in drama also became associated with a number of other characteristics that were not a necessary part of the philosophy of Shaftesbury of the Romanticism, if we may call it that, of Rousseau. These resulted in changes in all forms of drama ; we shall limit ourselves to comedy.

(1) The Reformed Sinner

One of the frequent characters in sentimental drama was the reformed sinner or evildoer ; he was almost always forgiven for reasons inherent in the sentimental approach to life. Since man was innately good, the reformation of the thief, the rake, the scoundrel, or the erring wife could be plausible, no matter how unsatisfactory the specific dramatic motivation for reform may have seemed to the more skeptical members of the audience. We must

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also take into account the dramatist's cast of mind. If he sincerely accepted a sentimental interpretation of human beings, he would be kind to his characters: he wanted virtue to triumph and he wanted evildoers to reform.

(2) Transgression of the Thoughtless Woman

Certain kinds of transgressors were somehow prevented by the dramatist from following their own acts to logical conclusions. The most common was the thoughtless woman who was prepared, in another famous sentimental phrase, "to stoop to folly". A certain cynicism is necessary to see sexual transgression as a fact in human society even if the transgressor is charming. In sentimental comedy, women almost never actually transgressed, and men very seldom. They were saved by the artificial intervention of the dramatist. When ladies were thus saved from their own folly, their husbands were, incidentally, spared the humiliation of the cuckold.

(3) Traditional Characters in New Forms

Certain traditional character types were changed slightly yet definitely, and new stock characters were invented. The cantankerous, tyrannical, and lecherous old man was revealed to have a heart of gold that nobody, including himself, knew about. The woman, constantly angered by an insensitive husband, found sources of strength within herself to resist taking the obvious revenge; and this nobility led the thoughtless and indifferent husband to love her. Usurers grew kind; panderers were transmogrified into kindly matchmakers operating within the approved bonds of matrimony. Seducers retreated before virtue in awed deference to young love, like the devil before the sign of the Cross. For goodness was natural and triumphant.

(4) Sensibility at Work

At the core of sentimental drama at its best and most meaningful lies the doctrine of sensibility. The doctrine of sensibility was also, unfortunately, responsible for what seems to us to be the greatest absurdities in the drama. It involved empathy with the pain and desires of another. It also involved a willingness to suffer oneself, an attitude that some modern psychologists consider an unhealthy masochism. The individual felt other people's pain so strongly that he was willing to make great personal sacrifices to spare them and save them from unhappiness. This desire to assume other people's troubles led to occasional absurdities. In one of the most sentimental of plays, Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy*, everybody wished to sacrifice his own happiness for the sake of others, but unfortunately each misread the others wishes.

In summary, therefore, sentimental drama, growing out of an assumption of the essential goodness of man, incorporated moral lessons by both precept and example, portrayed easy reformation of wrongdoers, and placed great emphasis on pity and self-sacrifice.

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1

Sheridan's Comedy

Main Features of Comedy

There are many definitions of comedy—brilliant, incisive, and profound. But it is sometimes desirable to avoid the nobler speculations and try to hold fast to concrete and readily observable elements. Any comedy will include one or a number of these features : (1) comedy of character types, (2) amusing intrigues and situations, (3) wit of language, (4) satiric commentary on human foibles, and (5) idyllic love stories whose strongest appeal is the warm glow with which they fill the audience. Since in a play all parts are organically fused, these features are closely related. Comic figures represent a satire on society, and their success as comic figures may be based on witty lines or on the situations in which they are played. Yet one has to try to make arbitrary distinctions, simply because without them analysis is impossible.

Sheridan : One of the Greatest Comic Dramatists

Sheridan was a master of four of the five kinds of comedy listed above. (It is difficult to see that he had any success, or desire for success, with the idyllic love story that arouses a warm glow.) But what accounts for his reputation as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, English writer of comedy ? Other dramatists have created amusing characters, have written incisive social satire, and have invented witty dialogue. Sheridan's admirers say that Sheridan's comic characters go beyond others, that his dialogue is wittier, his situations funnier, and his satire more biting. Yet this is more difficult to illustrate, for other readers may find Garrick funnier or Mrs. Centlivre's situations more farcical.

Wittier than Others

Our age says that, that which can be approached quantitatively can be demonstrated or proven. It might be worthwhile to try to steal a page from the book of the scientists and make quantitative statements. One can say that Sheridan has more comic situations, that they are more varied, and that they are never allowed to disintegrate into literal statement. One can say that Sheridan's characters follow their comic bents more consistently and that more comedy is derived from them than is usual. One can say that

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Sheridan has more witty lines and that more wit is somehow poured into each line than in the works of other dramatists.

Illustrations from the Rivals

To illustrate, *The Rivals* has an amazing array of comic characters. With the exception of Julia, every character is comic. Many are based on common stage types. Yet out of these theatrical types Sheridan gets new and additional humour. Sir Anthony Absolute is the traditional tyrannical father. This is not new, but his quarrels with his son are different. Lines such as, "I am sure, Sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to object to (marrying) a lady you know nothing of," carry this comedy one step further than usual. The insight that makes Jack Absolute lose this calmness and become just as irascible, if more debonair, than his father accounts for another step in characterization. And finally, the turn given the second quarrel that arises when Jack says he is agreeable and will marry the girl is beyond most dramatists. Sir Anthony can be angry when his son voices his right to an opinion on the woman he is to marry, he is also angry when his son refuses to have an opinion.

Sheridan goes one step beyond Others

Faulkland's obsession is highly comic in a wry way. He refuses to believe that Julia loves him adequately. There are a number of specific scenes that have as their major purpose the presentation of this weird trait. After every quarrel with his fiancee, Faulkland is filled with remorse ; at their next meeting, he voices the same suspicions. The real difference between Sheridan and other dramatists is that Sheridan never lets up until he has wrung the last drop of laughter from every situation. In a scene with Jack, devoted to quite different problems, Faulkland mentions that he has received a letter from Julia forgiving his last offence, and he wonders whether she forgives too easily. Do not this show an instability of character ! Even the professional reader is caught off guard—Sheridan can always carry the comedy one step beyond what one expects. If one also stops to consider the great number of characters, the least of them clearly individualized for comic effect, then Sheridan's genius becomes clear.

Defining a Comic Situation

A comic situation is easier to describe than to define. When a character talks freely about another and then finds that the object of his malicious remarks can overhear him, that is a comic situation. If a man courts a middle-aged widow, thinking he is wooing a beautiful belle, that is a comic situation. When two cowards are duelling, each believing the other to be professional bully, that is a comic situation.

Each Situation is made Comic

In Sheridan, all situations are comic. Many writers lose the

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comic touch when the business of the plot has to be moved forward. Sheridan almost never does. In *The School for Scandal*, the scenes leading up to, and including the sale of, family portraits are necessary for the advancement of the plot. Each scene is made a comic situation ; by a servant who wants to borrow money, just like his master ; by a Jewish moneylender, not himself particularly comic, caught in the middle between two men who are playing parts ; by double-edged handling of the irony of the profligate who condescends to the moneylender who is actually his wealthy uncle.

Some people consider the screen-scene in *The School for Scandal* the greatest comic scene in English drama. The plot would always make it a fine melodramatic scene ; that it is a great comic scene is due to the manner in which Sheridan took advantage of all its possibilities. Joseph's attempt at seduction has a kind of hilarious truth ; Sir Peter's lines create acute embarrassment in his host, and we can enjoy it. In the light of what the audience knows, Sir Peter's and Charles' lines have considerable comic irony. Even in the fifty act, where Sheridan is busy trying up loose ends, he can still discover and exploit comic potential. When Sir Oliver arrives, now in his own person, both brothers find cause to manhandle him, both are anxious, for quite different reasons, to get rid of him before "Sir Oliver" arrives ! Scene-by scene examination of the two plays shows that every scene is handled so that it becomes a comic situation.

His Witty Lines

Behind all these situations must lie the wit of Sheridan's lines. He is almost never "just getting on with the play." The quarrel between the Teazles would probably be comic no matter which dramatist wrote it ; in Sheridan's treatment every line is witty. Lady Teazle is therefore a delight to watch, where otherwise she might emerge as a shrew, a hoyden, or simply a stupid woman. Joseph's attempt to seduce his visitor includes wit of a different order ; he, Lady Teazle, and Sheridan are all playing to the audience in a passage that includes many levels of irony. He cannot mean what he says, and she cannot be taken in, yet, dear audience, is there not much truth in it ? The attempts at seduction would always be comic ; in Sheridan's handling it is much more than that.

Example from The Rivals

It is possible to illustrate with a word how an adequate line is turned into one that has great wit. In *The Rivals* Jack Absolute says, quite correctly, that he doubts whether Lydia would marry him under ordinary circumstances. "I am by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends consent ..and the reversion of a good fortune." The comment would be funny even if "the impediment of" were omitted, but the inclusion of the words adds greatly. A fortune is no impediment, but it is to Lydia ; but juvenile notions could make it seem so, nevertheless, at the moment,

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it is an impediment to Jack's love. A literal and comic line has been made witty, many-edged in its irony.

Sheridan's Comic Satire

Satire is everywhere in Sheridan's plays. It is inherent in plot, character, and lines. Satire may encompass many kinds of material, many attitudes, and many different degrees of intensity. It can be as vicious as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Jonson's Volpone ; or it can be more subtle, as in Jane Austen. The objects of satire may vary widely ; they may be individuals, or social manners, or literary forms, or cultural norms. The great point of danger in its use is this, that it cannot be controlled absolutely. Once the tone of a play is satiric, the satire rubs off, as it were, on everything within the play. Sheridan's satire is gentle, but we find it everywhere. His satire attacks people, hypocrisy, and the sentimentalism which was both a cultural norm and a literary convention.

Sentimental Attitude Dissected

If one considers the main characters of both plays together, one finds that the sentimental attitude has been thoroughly dissected. A character such as Faulkland is an attack on excessive sensibility ; but Jack Absolute, the anti-sentimentalist, can also get into trouble. Joseph Surface is an attack on sentimental hypocrisy. Sir Oliver does not approve of sentimental hypocrisy, but he is certainly a butt of humour. The tyrannical father is satirized in Sir Anthony ; but does Sir Peter, who is really making modest demands, comes off much better ? Sentiment is weak, comic, unreasonable but Charles is worthy of approval. But "he is so damned charitable" that it ruins him financially ; and he continues to be charitable—with other people's money. The usurer is the object of satiric attack, but so is his victim. The erring wife is satirized, so is her almost cuckolded husband. Line by line, Sheridan proceeds on his way, dispensing impartial injustice.

His Social Satire

Finally, Sheridan is usually accorded the honour of having written the most witty scenes of social satire in English comedy ; the meetings of *The School for Scandal* where reputations fall at every word, where rumours grow before our eyes, and where much of London and the world's society may perhaps recognize itself.

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An Estimate of Sheridan

Sheridan's True Wit and Humour

The dramatic work of Sheridan marks at once the height of the reaction against sentimental drama and the most finished achievement of the English comedy of manners. In the warfare with sentimentality Goldsmith was an elder, not a better soldier than Sheridan. In the two acts devoted to the rehearsal of puff's tragedy, the action of the burlesque yields constantly to Puff's illuminating explanations to his interlocutors. Many even of the chance phrases of *The Critic* have become proverbial, such as Sneer's "No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope," and Puff's "Where they do agree on the stage their unanimity is wonderful." One contemporary reviewer declared," There is, indeed, more true wit and humour crowded into this little performance, than has, perhaps, appeared since the days of Wycherley and Congreve. Age has somewhat withered the local hits in *The Critic*, but custom has not staled its infinite wit and felicity of phrase."

Intellectual Fireworks

The wit colours all the dialogue and, scintillating as it is, it seems to obscure the personalities of the various dramatic figures. Every one, in this world of refined manner, is able to say something that is brilliant. Never for a moment does the sparkle disappear ; so that sometimes we are inclined to be surfeited with too much of these intellectual fireworks.

Brilliancy of Dialogue

Thus, in his plays, Sheridan, by means of exaggeration of character, sparkling wit and brilliant dialogue and such other artificial devices, tries to make them theatrically more effective rather than dramatically artistic. That is the main reason why Sheridan's plays do not create mockery ; in *The Critic*, of the edification derived from the tearful travails of labouring sentiment, Sheridan constantly ridiculed the efforts of genteel comedy to convert the theatre into a school of morality. Yet he was not merely a destructive satirist, but a constructive dramatist. If he disarmed comedy of her weapon of sentiment, he whetted a new for her the sword of incisive wit which had been dulled by long neglect. With a brilliancy of dia-

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logue unmatched in English comedy since Congreve, and with a mastery of dramatic art unrivalled since Elizabethan drama, Sheridan reclaimed the Restoration comedy of manners and purged it of offence.

In Defence of Sheridan

Sheridan's main object of writing plays was to provide entertainment to his audience. That is why he lacks the high seriousness and the depth of Shakespeare, with whom he stands to comparison. But to condemn him, as has often been done, because he is trivial and superficial, because he arouses no deep emotion and thought, is to condemn, all irresponsible amusement. Besides the charge of triviality, the second charge laid against Sheridan is that of plagiarism. Regarding this Balston has remarked in defence of Sheridan, "Another charge which has been brought against Sheridan is that of plagiarism, and the accusation has been supported by a hundred pieces of evidence. The defence, however, is now as familiar as it is conclusive. A work of art is not, any more than a human being or a vegetable, a spontaneous growth, unconditioned by the time and place and circumstances of its creation. It is born with a literary ancestry, and it can escape not more easily or completely from its ancestral traditions than a man from the traditions of his family. It no more detracts from Sheridan's genius to point out resemblances to Wycherley or Congreve than it would smirch the reputation of a peer to bear a likeness to the founder of his family. And even if the resemblance is something more than the outcome of tradition, the comparative study of literature has shown that direct borrowing, so far from being impermissible, has given us some of its finest passages. It required but a few touches to transform an extract from a prose translation of Plutarch into the magnificent description of the barge of Cleopatra—as Shakespearean's a passage as any in the plays." With regard to Sheridan as to Shakespeare, the only legitimate question is whether he assimilated what he borrowed, and in both cases the answer is unhesitating. The plays of Sheridan, are throughout essentially and characteristically the work of Sheridan. Even Mrs. Malaprop, whom he lifted almost bodily from his mother's unpublished play, *A Journal to Bath*, has become part and parcel of his work. His real originality lies in the completeness and individuality of his work, without any reference to its sources or its predecessors ; and individuality in works of art, as in human beings is seen in the strength and clearness of the impressions they make on others. , If an artist has welded his material into a complete organic whole in which nothing is superfluous or lacking, he has achieved a work of art."

His Success

In spite of his obvious limitations Sheridan has achieved in his own field an appreciable amount of success. In this connection Nettelton has observed : "A dramatic artist, not a deep interpreter of life, Sheridan brilliantly touched the surface without sounding the

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depths. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in his philosophy. He was, indeed, no dreamer. His eyes sought the immediate foreground, not the far horizon. In the wood outside of Athens he might have recognised Nic Bottom and his fellows, while Oberon and Titania fitted past unheeded. Sheridan's world, in reality, was Bath and London. Even Lydia Languish, who sought a sentimental elopement to shock society, would have been a sorry exile in the Forest of Arden. Wit rather than humour, brilliancy rather than depth, satire rather than sympathy, art rather than nature, are the characteristics of Sheridan's comedies. Unable to follow Shakespeare through the depths of the *comedie humaine*, Sheridan wisely chose, under the leadership of the comic dramatists of Restoration, to pursue the easier path of the comedy of manners.

Second only to Shakespeare

Judged merely by the test of continued stage popularity, Sheridan stands today in English drama second only to Shakespeare. The professional verdict of the modern stage is well expre sed in the words of Sir Henry Irving : Sheridan brought the comedy of manners to the highest perfection, and *The School for Scandal* remains to this day the most popular comedy in the English language. Some of the characters both in this play and in *The Rivals* have become so closely associated with the correct English speech that we may fairly regard them as imperishable. No farce of our time has so excellent a chance of immortality as *The Critic* The history of the development of English drama since the opening of the theatres in 1660 reaches a significant climax in Sheridan. He is at once the heir to the best traditions of Restoration comedy and the most notable English dramatist of the eighteenth century.

As a Humorist

Is this picture of life (as presented in *The School for Scandal*) any more than comic ? Is it real or true or important ? It certainly does not reflect a mind seriously concerned over the problems of society as do the plays of Ibsen and Bernard Shaw. Nor does it reflect the manners and social views of a period with any such clearness as do the comedies of Etherege and Wycherley We are not quite sure whether the manner of Sheridan's comedies belong to his own or to an earlier age, whether they are drawn from life or from preceding drama. We can scarcely assert that they present a profound or searching study of the universality of human behaviour. They were the work of a young man, witty, a great dramatist and a great humorist. His powers as a dramatist are displayed in design, in dialogue, in a most effective representation of comic characters. His powers as a humorist are to be found in a wit that is unequalled in readiness and abundance, in the high spirits which will find a laugh anywhere, and in a view of mankind which discovers plenty that is amusing without probing too deeply. If his representation of life seems sometimes artificial or theatrical, it is well to remember

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that it is unique. Is there any other picture of English society so vivid and so entertaining as *The School for Scandal*?

His High Comedy

Sheridan had no rivals and few followers. It is absurd to say that his successes revived the comedy of manners and killed the sentimental species. It would be nearer the truth to say that he killed the old form. No one could emulate him, and with his plays virtually end the great tradition that began with Dryden and Etherege but had been sadly lapsing after Farquhar, until this later bloom in Murphy, Goldsmith, and Sheridan. There were, of course, plays of this type after Sheridan but none of importance. Farces and light of comedies still preferred the comic to the dearful; lively intrigues, low comic scenes, and even attempts at wit were to be found in sentimental pieces, but only rarely an attempt was made to write high comedy that was both amusing and witty.

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Origin and History of the Play

A Great Success

The School for Scandal was produced on May 8th 1777, and was instantly a great success. For Sheridan, as the new manager of Drury Lane theatre, it was a double triumph, and Garrick, who wrote the prologue for the play, now felt thoroughly justified in his choice of Sheridan as his successor in that theatre where he himself had had success after success. The cast was a brilliant one ; it included many of the leading actors and actresses of the day, notably the great comic actor John Palmer as Joseph Surface, Thomas King, later to play Puff in *The Critic*, as Sir Peter Teazle, Richard Yates, an outstanding Shakespearean actor, as Sir Oliver Surface, and the Shakespearean actress Frances Abington as Lady Teazle. So launched it has held the stage ever since.

Sheridan's Manuscripts

The poet Thomas Moore, when writing his *Memoir of Sheridan* (1825), had free access to many of the dramatist's manuscripts, and from these he was able to show how *The School for Scandal* developed in Sheridan's hands. It grew out of what were first drafted as two separate plays, one on the theme of scandal mongering, the other a comedy in two acts dealing with The Teazles. The first theme had occurred to him when, living at Bath, he saw scandal rampant. The process by which the two plays became blended into one must have been gradual and very careful. There was a considerable change, and all for the better. In the original, Sir Peter Teazle was Mr. Solomon Teazle, a widower with one child surviving out of five, and recently remarried to a young Mrs. Teazle, who had the fashionable extravagance and country origin of her successor, but little of Lady Teazle's indefinable charm and wayward grace. But much even of the brilliant dialogue is to be seen in the earlier version, and Sheridan is revealed as one of those writers whose gift it is to bring their work to perfection by polish and revision.

Talent for Epigram

Sheridan had a talent for epigram, and a mind fertile of ideas, but he was not content with what came to him spontaneously. When he had coined an epigram, he would keep it until an opening occurred for its use in conversation, and he was similarly thrifty and careful with his material for his plays. Thus he worked so assiduously at

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The School for Scandal that he left several manuscripts of all but the last five scenes ; of those Moore found only one draft scribbled on separate pieces of paper, and at its end the words, in Sheridan's handwriting, 'Finished at last, thank God", to which the theatre's prompter, anxiously waiting, had added ; "Amen, W. Hopkins."

His Two Main Aims

Apart from his chief purpose of writing a brilliant comedy to fill Drury Lane, Sheridan clearly had two main aims. One was to expose the folly, harm, and ill nature of irresponsible scandal mongering, and thereby he gives us his only play with an obvious moral. So the intellectual brilliance of plays like *The Rivals* and *The Critic* is here too, but with it there is a deeper seriousness which culminates in the sobering of Lady Teazle by her rescue on the brink of disaster. His other aim was to follow up Goldsmith's and his own attack on the sentimental comedy of refinement and tears then in fashion. So we have the satiric portrayal of Joseph Surface, the sentimental knave, a man of sentiment, moral to the last drop.

A Comedy With All The Merits

As a result of these aims, of the blended themes, and of the careful way they were worked up, *The School for Scandal* is a remarkably full play, a comedy with all the merits of its kind. It is the last and supreme example of the comedy of manners, and portrays a world very familiar to Sheridan from his early years at Bath. Even away from the theatre we can readily visualise the leisurely bustle of that age of elaborate women's dress, of going visiting in sedan chairs, of chocolate drinking and card playing, of elopements, scandal, duelling, drinking, and gambling—and, at its best, of polish and wit. Sheridan had no need of deliberate topicalities to make it real, and such topical references as that to the Irish tontine are few. Manners change, but, as his satire plays on newspapers, servants, money-lenders and their jargon, changes in fashion, self-styled poets and wits, we realise that their kinds are still with us, as also, unfortunately, are all the varieties of malicious and irresponsible scandal from the feminine varieties of Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, and Lady Teazle to the masculine ones of Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite. It is still well to be reminded, as Sir Peter tells Lady Sneerwell, that "true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of."

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Historical Background

The Restoration Theatre

The development of the Restoration theatre out of its Jacobean and Caroline predecessors was more continuous than might have been expected from the events of the political world or the social scene. In 1642 the London theatres were closed, to be unofficially and temporarily reopened in 1648, officially permitted under a limited licence in 1656, and fully restored in 1660.

During the interval some of the actors had performed in private houses or surreptiously even in theatres ; the acting tradition was thus unbroken and the boys who had played Juliet and Annabella came back in 1660 to find their roles taken by women, a change which had been long on its way. A French company with women players had performed in London during the thirties and had already broken down some of the prejudice against them. Ladies after all, not infrequently performed in masques. Why not, therefore, on the stage ? The public during the Commonwealth had read with greed every printed play on which it could lay hands. The theatre habit was too strong among the English to be so lightly killed, nor were the Puritans by any means unanimously opposed to it. At Cromwell's Courts there were occasional pastorals—Marvell's, for instance, for the wedding of the Protector's daughter—and it may be safely presumed that private theatricals were still frequent about the country.

The Distinction between Jacobean and Restoration

The commonly held but misleading belief that the closing of the theatres broke the continuity of dramatic developments has been confirmed by the loose habit of calling all drama up to 1642 Elizabethan, or at best Jacobean, and all drama after 1660 Restoration, although there is nothing Elizabethan and not much Jacobean about the distinctively Caroline work of Shirley, Cartwright, or Carlell, who wrote in the thirties ; and nothing particularly Restoration about Congreve, Vanbrugh, or Farquhar all of whom are depicting the settled post—Revolution society King William III. These are terms which need modification if the richest century of the English theatre is to be understood at all.

Comedy of Humours to Comedy of Manners

Comedy in the seventeenth century describes a continuous movement—with incidental variations—from the Comedy of Humours

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which was Jonson's development of the old morality play, to the Comedy of Manners which, in a thin and decadent form, still holds the English stage to-day. The downward movement of tragedy, is, unhappily, also continuous ; in spite of the conflagration at the beginning of the century and the unexpected flash of Thomas Otway in the eighties, the English genius seems at once too humorous and too humane for tragedy. Common sense will keep breaking in. Even Dryden thought that Hyppolitus in Racine's *Phedre* was a perfect fool rather than a perfect hero. The result was a steady decline from the thundering magnificence of the Elizabethans to the refined boredom of the Augustan Age. The almost unreadable tragedies of Nicholas Rowe and his contemporaries are thin-blooded descendants of those of Webster, Middleton, and Ford : the ghost of Jacobean drama sitting crowned on the grave thereof.

The New Theatre-Going Public

More significant than the closing of the theatres of fourteen years was the gradual change in the composition of the public. The increase of more rabid Puritanism among craftsman and small trades people even before the theatres closed had altered the social character of the audience ; the London theatres continued to be supported after the Restoration, as during the thirties, by the more cultivated bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, and their innumerable hangers on. Before 1642 it had been usual for the King to send for the players to Whitehall, although Queen Henrietta Maria had been unconventional enough, once at least, to attend the theatre in person. Her son, Charles II, with his easy delight in plays and players, established the custom of the royal box at Drury Lane.

Wider Circle of Society Represented

Before the Civil War broke out playwrights were already moving away from the once popular scenes of apprentice and City life towards those of wealth and fashion. It is, however, an exaggeration to suggest that Restoration drama concentrated on the Court set even during the period when the Court were ardent theatre-goers. In Etherege and Wycherley as well as in the later Congreve and Vanbrugh the society depicted touches only the edge of the Court circle and is based on a wider circle of the wealthy, the intelligentia, the wits, who formed the influential part of the audience.

Themes of Restoration Comedies

The type of comedy which pleased them most was concerned exclusively with the pursuit of women by men and of men by women ; no moral was now added—as in Shirley or Brome—to sweeten the ending ; marriage and fidelity are usually mocked, although conventional marriages do occur to end some of these plays and there is by no means always a suggestion that they will be ephemeral. Virtuous characters are rare, but not, as some critics sweepingly suggest, wholly absent. Congreve's three chief heroines, Cynthia,

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Angelica, and Millamant, are not merely above suspicion, but even cold. Wycherley has his Alithea, his more dubious Fidelia, and an earlier heroine, Hyppolita, is a gay but not a bad girl. The dialogue aims at great verbal wit but at obscenity chiefly by innuendo. It is more polished and far less openly coarse than that of the earlier period.

"He assured me your ladyship should come to no damage", pleads Lady Wishfort's maid to her mistress as an excuse for her plot to palm off the footman on her as an aristocratic lover. "No damage ?" shrieks the outraged old harridan. Lady Wishfort and her maid would have used plainer English fifty years before and would have raised a less delighted laugh.

Revivals of the Older Drama

The taste of the period was, however, by no means stilted. Revivals of the older drama were frequent, and veteran play-goers must have appreciated the nuances of difference in the familiar scenes which came from the introduction of more complex effects and the appearance of women players. Margaret Hughes, one of the first recorded tragediennes, made her reputation as a gentle ash blonde Desdemona. Her fame paled before that of the passionate Mrs. Barry, for whom the love-sick Otway wrote all his greatest female parts. Certainly with the women players and the open erotic attachments which now existed between the audience and the stage, the fashion of writing parts to suit specific talents much increased. Mechanical aids which had begun under Charles I developed steadily under his son. The veteran Davenant believed in the spectacular ; he had been about to build a theatre for elaborate, operatic shows before the war came ; in 1656 he received his licence from Cromwell and introduced the new art of opera to England with *The Siege of Rhodes*.

Plays with Past Traditions

Apart from the new taste for more music and more scenery many of the plays produced during the last forty years of the seventeenth century are still closely akin to the earlier models. Tuke's untidy *Adventures of Five House*, d'Urfey's sprawling gallery of adaptations from novels and histories, Lacy's light hearted Civil War comedy, *The Old Troop*, are all close to the past traditions of the English theatre, Thomas Shadwell, a prolific playwright of the eighties, modelled himself frankly on Ben Jonson (although he could find time to refurbish Shakespeare as well). In his comedies, *The Squire of Alsatia* and the gaily provincial *Bury Fair*, he followed out the formula of the comedy of humours with competent, if mechanical, characterizatiou and lively dialogue.

Jonsonian Characters

The playwrights with whom the new age opened, Tom Killigrew, George Etherege, John Crowne, John Lacy, and the

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fashionable rake Sir Charles Sedley, all treated their characters in the Jonsonian manner and created theatrical versions of one or two social types which were to become recurrent in Restoration comedy. John Crowne Fop's, Sir Courtly Nice, is closelyfol lowed by Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, from whom descends, among a host of lesser fops, Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington. Etherege's country girl, Miss Harriet, is a charming first sketch for the less charming, more memorable Miss Prue and Miss Hoyden with whom Congreve and Vanbrugh followed. Dryden perhaps alone of these earlier writers tried, not altogether successfully, to maintain the pastoral note in comedy and to handle character with greater subtlety of light and shade. But neither his *Wild Gallant* nor his *Marriaged la Mode* altogether succeeds in combining the old romance with the new cynicism.

Theatres built on French Model

The theatres which opened in 1660 were no longer on the old model, with the apron stage and the audience crowding close to the players. They were now built on the French model, with a picture stage framed in the procenium arch and the audience separated from it and grouped in a semi-circular building in front of and above it. The court had not long resettled at White-hall before French comedy became the talk of the day. The precise influence of French models is a matter of dispute. English drama had already deeper and tougher roots than French drama, and French classical tragedy almost instantaneously provoked English decision. Although the rhymed couplet was for a while tried out on the stage, the fundamentals of English tragedy always remained much closer to the Elizabethan; passion and action could not or would not be forced into the French mould.

Moliere : The Chief Source

In comedy the relations between the English and the French stage were rather different. While almost all English dramatists mocked the unities and preferred to follow the old method of an untidy naturalism, they saw no objection to stealing any plot that took their fancy. It was unfortunate on the whole that they used Moliere as their chief source, because it is kinder and fairer to forget *Le Misanthrope* and *L'Ecole des Femmes* when considering *The Plain Dealer* or *The Country Wife*, which have nothing to do with the French except that Wycherley took a fancy to the stories. Barefaced robberies of plot and situation continued over the whole of this period, but the influence which this represents was skin deep. Originality was not the strong point of any of these playwrights and they pillaged their own dead countrymen for phrases and situations as unscrupulously as they did the French. Sedley's best scene in *Bellamira* is merely an adaptation of the great Falstaff scene with eleven men in buckram.

Contribution of Wycherley

The grave-headed, neurotic Wycherley is the first great comic

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dramatist after the Restoration. His quality is very hard to estimate on the four plays which were all that he left. Possibly he was an Elizabethan out of place and would have done less startling but more satisfying work had he been able to vent his impotent rage against mankind in the manner of his predecessors. His first play, *Love in a Wood*, is a brisk piece of nonsense about philandering pairs and mistaken identities in St. James' Park. His second play, the *Gentleman Dancing Master*, has a purely Jonsonian character in the tyrannous old father whose humour it is always to be in the right, a foible which in the end compels him to pretend that he has known all along about his daughter's intrigue with the hero and had always intended to have him for a son-in-law.

In the unmitigated brutality of *The Plain Dealer* and the satirical violence of *The Country Wife* the savage Wycherley at last breaks through. Where Moliere's *Misanthrope* is a character very nearly tragic in the intensity of his feelings, Wycherley's plain-dealer, Manly, is merely odious, a boor who thinks himself better than others because he makes no attempt to conceal his feelings. It is never clear—a serious fault in drama—whether Wycherley himself condones Manly's conduct which is throughout repulsive if frank. This smug and selfish savage who imagines himself superior to others merely because he is ruder may have been Wycherley's conception of himself. The frequent coupling of the words Manly Wycherley by his contemporaries when they spoke of him suggests that this was known to be so. This unpleasing but undeniably striking play contains a scene satirizing the scandal mongering conversation of women which was lifted and adapted by Sheridan for *The School for Scandal*. Wycherley's final capitulation to the manners of his time was signalized by his last and best play, *The Country Wife*. This work, which scandalized even the London of 1672, amounts in fact to a violent statement (in the wittiest terms) that if society wishes to go to hell in its own way, it can go for all Wycherley cares. Hence the elaborate concluding scene in which husbands and wives consent to remain the dupes or the accessories of Mr. Horner's indelicate make-believe. Regarded neither as satire nor as comedy is it a pleasant play, but the characters are conceived with a gusto which, for once, Jonson could not have surpassed, and in dialogue and situation it still remains one of the funniest and most rewarding comedies in the language.

Tragedies of Otway

Very soon after the appearance of Wycherley's comedies, the tragedies of Thomas Otway took the stage, Otway, whose *Venice Preserv'd* was regularly revived until the beginning of the nineteenth century, is the last English tragic dramatist of any real moment, in spite of the contemporary neglect of his work. Otway's verse, it is true, lacks the youthful splendour of his Elizabethan forerunners, but it is often moving and never feeble. His characters are convincing and his sense of theatre is considerable. Moreover, he had a real conception of the tragic in life : his catastrophes occur because of what is false within. His heroes and heroines, usually the weak and

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the well-meaning, bring disaster on themselves and on those they love. Don Carlos in the play of that name and, above all, Jaffir in *Venice Preserv'd* are sensitive studies, of decent honourable men vacillating in the grip of passions or problems which are beyond them. Belvidera, the heroine of *Venice Preserv'd* who incites her husband to betray his friends and goes out of her mind after he has committed suicide, is an unusually fine study of a woman too set upon her own way to realize what its consequences may be to the man she loves. Her mad scene, cruelly parodied by Sheridan in *The Critic*, is funny enough if snatched out of its context, but in its place in the play is dramatically effective and psychologically probable. Otway's was a young talent, still maturing when he died at the age of just over thirty, some say of hunger and some of love for Mrs. Barry. Whatever the circumstances of poor Otway's death—and enough is known of his sensibility and his sufferings to justify the adjective poor—it robbed English drama of a potentially great tragic writer.

The Tragedians

Dryden's three tragedies, of about the same time, are inferior to Otway's both in characterization and drama. Tragedy in the grand manner, and Dryden in particular, was satirized in the Duke of Buckingham's clever squib, *The Rehearsal*, a popular piece of erudite impertinence which Sheridan used as the basis for his better known *The Critic*. No other tragedian need be seriously mentioned. That interesting woman writer, Mrs. Aphra Behn, provided the stage with numerous tedious and pretentious dramas ; her real talent lay elsewhere. Nathaniel Lee and Nicholas Rowe who bring up the rear are deservedly as dead as Queen Anne, although it was Rowe who gave to the language the expression gay Lothario. At least it was Rowe who wrote *The Fair Penitent* in which it occurs. The play is very loosely based on Massinger's *Fatal Dowry* and tells of young woman, Calista, who seduced by her husband's friend Lothario just before her marriage, attempts in vain to keep the secret of her crime. Weak as the play is it provided in Calista a favourite part for Mrs. Siddons, and in Lothario a model from which the novelist Samuel Richardson, must have drawn inspiration for the most attractive blackguard in friction, the Lovelace of Clarissa Harlowe.

Dilettantism : The Ruin of Drama

Dilettantism—which, to begin with, had added a certain freshness to comedy—was probably in the end its undoing. Too many witty young men, from 1630 onwards, were diluting the professional manner with their more frivolous attemips. From dilettantism its in a short step to mere frivolity. In Vanbrugh this is already apparent. He took no trouble at all. Because he had high spirits, a sense of character and theatre, and an inventive wit, he wrote remarkably entertaining plays none the less : his *Relapse* and his *Provoked Wife* can still comfortably hold the modern stage. He abandoned the theatre at a comparatively early age for architecture. Farquhar eq ally gay and amateurish when he began to write for the

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stage, was finding himself as a dramatist of manners, and a conscientious artist in dialogue and character before he died. His *Constant Couple* and *Recruiting Officer* are comedy trembling on the brink of farce, although the character of Sir Harry Wildair in the first is one of the great creations of English dramatic fiction ; of all the high spirited rakes of the period, Mirabell included, Wildair is by far the most attractive and the most convincing. In his last play, *The Beaux Stratagem* Farquhar is one the way to no less witty but more solid comedy of manners. His early death cut off what might have been a valuable development.

William Congreve

The outstanding dramatist of the closing decade of the century is William Congreve. It would be easy to make too much of this figure of Congreve, who abandoned the career of a dramatist at thirty, and precisely in the year 1700, for the more serious business of leading a civilized and cultured life between his residence and the coffee houses. There is a certain significance about this, and it is probably not by chance that the only comparable dramatist in the next two centuries, Sheridan, also wrote his comedies before he was thirty—and for fun. Serious creative literature was turning away from drama towards the novel.

The reputation of Congreve has never quite stabilized. In his own time he was rated in terms that must be regarded as too high. He combined, wrote one critic, Shakespeare's wit and Jonson's oil. Dryden, a good judge, declared that

> Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
>
> To Shakespeare gave as much ; she could not give him more.
>
> It was generally felt, as the century drew to its close, that in other spheres besides the drama.
>
> When Dryden goes, 'tis he must fill the chair,
>
> With Congreve only Congreve can compare.

But the bright talent for writing evaporated into a talent for talking. After his fifth play, *The Way of the World*, he scarcely wrote again. His first play, *The Old Bachelor*, is a gay comedy of intrigue, still Jonsonian in conception but remarkable for the epigrammatic wit of the dialogue. His second play, the *Double Dealer*, has a strangely tragic underplot which disturbs the balance of an otherwise dexterous comedy of manners, full of cleverly drawn characters, conceived, sometimes from recognizable living models, as individuals and not merely as humours ; the affected Lady Froth, the doting Sir Paul Plyant, the vain Mr. Brisk. But the passionate ageing Lady Touchwood and her jealous husband are too painfully real for comedy. Congreve drew character too well to be able to keep such figures within the convention of comedy, as the less subtle Wycherley so easily could. When at the close Lady Touchwood—all her plots

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discovered—hurls herself across the stage in an agony of despair with her angry husband in pursuit, the fragile walls of comedy crack to pieces. 'This is all very extraordinary, let me perish', exclaims little Mr. Brisk in an effort to preserve the gaiety of mood and bring down a more seemly curtain. But he cannot save his author.

Yet in *The Mourning Bride* Congreve showed that he could not sustain high tragedy. Had fashion allowed him to write tragedy in prose, perhaps it would have been different ; he had been very near to it in parts of *The Double Dealer*. But his verse is too conscious and his conception of character outside the world he knew and lived in, too stilted.

His Fame

His fame stands, and on the whole securely, on *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World*. In both of these he develops not the comedy of humours, but the naturalist comedy of manners. Certain characters—Miss Prue, Sir Sampson Legend, Witwoud—approximate to existing types, but they are endowed with strong individuality of their own. The drama—in spite of a good deal of extraneous plot—is provided by the interplay of the characters who are seen wonderfully in the round. Congreve, in the capacity to suggest the human tragedy behind the human comedy, is the only writer of this time who can be compared with Moliere. There is a profound comment on social customs and on human character in the drawing of Valentine, the young man brought up to enjoy private means and suddenly disinherited ; and his father, Sir Sampson Legend, approaches nearer to implied tragedy than to force in the grandeur of his self conceit and the absurdity of his courting of his son's beloved the young Angelica. Each character is drawn so as to convey a whole life off the stage as well as on it.

His Dealing with Human and Social Problems

In *Love for Love* Congreve has painted a fairly comprehensive piece in which a number of human and social problems are kept moving all the time. In *The Way of the World* the focus is much narrower. The centre of interest is the duel of wits between Millamant and Mirabell ; the surrounding society merely reflects aspects of the battle royal between them ; the faithless husband Fainall, the jilted Mrs. Marwood and the ageing Lady Wishfort, serve dramatically to heighten the horrid possibilities latent in the situation between Millamant and Mirabell. These two are not on a level with the merry quarrelling young lovers of Elizabethan comedy. They are the civilized man and the civilized woman working out move by move and step by step in the wittiest language and with an appearance of great confidence, the insoluble problem of how to deal with an animal passion in a sophisticated world.

Social Morals of the Time Reflected

This background to the social morals of the period should not

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be forgotten. The old system of chivalry, in which women were chattels—precious chattels, but chattels none the less—to be protected and possessed had in an attenuated form governed the moral outlook of the upper classes well into the seventeenth century. A new morality had not yet been worked out to fit a society which had finally come unmoored from feudalism and chivalry. With all their cynicism, the morals of the fast set in the later seventeenth century represent a move towards greater justice between men and women. The capacity to meet a man on equal terms, which had been the prerogative of an occasional Brundild or Britomart, was now open to any woman of quick wits. It can hardly be sustained that the morality depicted by Wycherley, Etherege, Congreve, and Vanbrugh is an advance on that depicted by Spenser, Shakespeare, Massinger, or even Ford. But at least theirs is a society in which neither Hero nor Imogen could be so scandalously mistreated by their lovers with the full approval of society. The excesses of comparatively small set of men and women, and of the comedies which depicted them, were the price paid for a steady social advance.

Collier's Attack

Two years before the appearance of *The Way of the World*, in 1698, Jeremy Collier published his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. This naive outpouring, by a clergyman who was not much of a theatregoer, succeeded by only a few years a parallel outburst by Thomas Rymer, the lawyer and antiquary, some of whose ideas it reproduces. Collier's vituperation startled public opinion. Proceedings for indecency were started against d'Urfey and Congreve himself. The reverend gentleman had spent his time (most unsuitably for one of his function, as Dryden pointed out) combing the printed editions of plays for their depravities, and his book contains an exhaustive list of where these are to be found—title, author, act, scene, and line—very convenient for those who are interested in such things. The fatuous old snob was as much incensed by mockery of the upper classes as he was by bawdy jokes. They kick the coronets about the stage, he protested explosively, meaning that Vanbrugh and others had depicted members of the peerage as the tricksters and fools that some of them undoubtedly were.

Death of Comedy

There was at one time an inclination to believe that English comedy died of the shock administered by Jeremy Collier's attack. This is hardly true, for Vanbrugh, d'Urfey, Congreve, and Farquhar, shortly resumed writing without undue embarrassment. But they were the last in the great tradition of English comedy. Collier's attack merely voiced what was being felt fairly widely in literate society because the robust fashion in the theatre had exhausted itself. The fierce wind of genius no longer filled the sails of English drama ; under the insipid influence of Rowe and Addison and Colley

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Cibber it was long to ride becalmed a painted ship upon a painted ocean.

The development of easy, flexible prose and the Puritan prejudice which overhung the provinces and the commercial middle classes together forced the English inventive genius to find another outlet. Men who, in 1600, would have hastened to London to write for the stage, now found the means to reach an even wider public in a manner which was not condemned by the classes from which most of them came. This was the novel. A butcher's son, of Nonconformist background, Daniel Foe, had been born nine years before Congreve : he changed his name to Defoe in 1702. His late-maturing talent, expended on pamphleteering, did not find its outlet in *Robinson Crusoe* until 1719. To him and his like came the dramatic heritage of the English creative genius. The novel, the outcast of the seventeenth century, was to be the glory of the eighteenth.

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11

Outline Story of the Play

Dramatis Personae

Charles Surface is the prodigal but warm-hearted libertine. Maria is the heiress who loves him and is won by him, but who has to defy the advances of suitors preferred by her guardian. Joseph Surface is the contemporary man of sentiment, with a mixture of the Restoration rake. Sir Oliver Surface is the wealthy relative who conceals his identity so that he may be a better judge of character. Rowley is the typical devoted family retainer.

Stagecraft

It was Sheridan's triumph that on to this conventional framework he grafted novel developments and additions which resulted in a masterpiece of stage-craft. Comedy has always been a vehicle for slanderous tongues, but seldom in such concentrated fashion as in that "scandalous college" of which Lady Sneerwell is president, and which includes Mrs. Candour hiding her malice under an affectation of good nature ; the scurrilous Mr. Crabtree with his poetaster nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite, who specializes in satires and lampoons on particular people ; and for a time Lady Teazle, till she hands back her diploma for killing characters. It may be doubted, however, whether much has been gained by making Lady Sneerwell secretly in love with Charles, and therefore making trouble between him and Maria by bribing Snake to forge love-letters from Lady Teazle to Charles and answering them herself, till Snake finally confesses.

Man of Sentiment

Many comedy libertines have, under a test, shown their better side, but none stands out like Charles Surface auctioning the family portraits to the pretended "Mr. Premium" supported by Moses, but refusing at any price to part with that of his Uncle Oliver, and thus winning his heart. In contrast is the elder brother, Joseph (always *punctiliously* called "Mr. Surface"). Through him Sheridan delivered the death-blow in the campaign against moralizing sentimental comedy in which Goldsmith had been his forerunner. When Joseph, in mock pity for Charles, proclaims "The man who does not

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share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves—', Lady Sneerwell, who sees through him, cuts him short with "O Lord, you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends" Yet soon afterwards he assures Maria that "to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief". The person who is most taken in by such utterances is Sir Peter Teazle, who declares that "there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment".

Intriguing Developments

Yet at this very time Joseph is the treacherous enemy of his household happiness. The relation between an elderly husband and a youg wife, Chaucer's "January and May", has been a constant subject of satire. But never has it been handled with finer art than in the case of Sir Pater and his "seven months" bride. In addition to the difference of age there is that of social standing. Sir Peter has married the daughter of a plain country squire and made of her, as he reminds her, a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank Exasperated as he is by her extravagance and choice of undesirable friends, his tender feeling for her cannot help finding expression even after their quarrel. But in her wish to be completely in the fashion she has allowed Joseph to become her lover on platonic terms—with which he is no longer content. So when she rashly visits him in his library he assails her with a subtle seducer's plea till Sir Peter is suddenly announced. There follows one of the classical episodes of the British stage—Lady Teazle hiding a screen, and Sir Peter's glimpse of a petticoat, explained by Joseph as being that of a little French milliner ; Charles Surface in the hearing of Sir Peter, unseen in a closet, disclaiming any fondness for his lady ; Sir Peter seeking to turn the laugh against Joseph by telling about the little French milliner, and, when Charles throws down the screen, their startled cries :

Charles. Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful !

Sir Peter. Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable !

and the discovered wife's repudiation of Joseph's tale and her promise of amendment.

Fascinating Conclusion

It is a theatrical climax of the first order, but for sheer technical virtuosity it is challenged by the exploitation of it in the College of Slander. Mrs. Candour and Sir Benjamin Backbite contend as to whether the gallant was Charles or Mr. Surface ; Sir Benjamin gives details of a duel with swords, till his uncle corrects this to pistols, but both agreeing that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded—till he confuses them both by walking in unharmed. It only remains for Sir Oliver to reveal himself and affectionately salute Charles, on whom Sir Peter bestows Maria with the wish that they may "live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do."

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Scene-wise Summary of the Play

ACT I

Scene I

Scene I is set in the widowed Lady Sneerwell's dressing-room. While that lady is completing an elaborate process of getting up, she is entertaining a gentleman called Snake. The introductory lines reveal that Lady Sneerwell is a past mistress of the fashionable art of scandal mongering. She knows no pleasure equal to that of reducing others to the level of her own injured reputation. Snake occupies himself, by the evidence, of his own words, as an agent and go-between in the dissemination of scandal. "I live by the badness of my character", he explains in the last scene of the play. The subject of conversation turns of Lady Sneerwell's neighbour, a certain Sir Peter Teazle, and the main story begins to unfold.

A confused situation comes to light. Sir Peter Teazle acts as "a kind of guardian" to two brothers, Charles and Joseph Surface. Sir Peter is also the guardian of a young woman called Maria, who is the possessor of an attractive fortune. Charles Surface has the reputation for being "the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom" ; he loves Maria, and she loves him. Joseph Surface, on the other hand, is universally well spoken of," and his name is linked by rumour with that of Lady Sneerwell. Joseph however, does not love Lady Sneerwell ; he creates that impression in order to cover his real ambition, which is to marry Maria and obtain her wealth. Lady Sneerwell recognizes Joseph as an artful, selfish, and malicious person, but helps him in his scheme to win Maria, because Maria stands between her and the bankrupt Charles Surface, whom Lady Sneerwell is ashamed to admit she loves desperately. The hypocrite, Joseph, has successfully maintained the pose of a benevolent praiseworthy "man of sentiment", and has completely won the favour of old Sir Peter to the detriment of brother Charles. (Note : Joseph's description as the "man of sentiment" recurs throughout the play, and it is as well to appreciate the meaning given by Sheridan to the word "sentiment". In this sense sentiment denotes a briefly expressed piece of moralizing. Joseph is therefore given to mouthing moral platitudes in order to impress society with his integrity).

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Joseph himself now joins Lady Sneerwell and Snake. Lady Sneerwell informs Joseph that she has revealed their secret plans regarding Maria and Charles to Snake, who, she assures, Joseph, can be trusted. Joseph pretends to agree, but when Snake has left the room, he voices his suspicions : Snake has often been detected in the company of a man called Rowley, a former steward to the Surface family and not friendly towards Joseph ; Snake "hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy", and is likely to betray them.

The entry of Maria interrupts this discussion. She has come to Lady Sneerwell's to avoid a distasteful suitor, Sir Benjamin Backbite, who with his odious uncle, Crabtree is calling on Sir Peter Teazle. Maria discloses that she dislikes Backbite and Crabtree because of their addition to malicious gossip. Joseph takes the opportunity of delivering himself of some moralizing, and Lady Sneerwell produces the characteristic epigram : the malice of a good thing (wit) is the barb that makes it stick.

A Mrs. Candour is announced. Before she appears, it is made clear that she belongs to that class of persons who mask their mischievous defamations by pretence of the best of intentions. On entering she amply justifies this description ; blissfully ignoring the ironical remarks of the others, she delivers outrageously discreditable reports of the behaviour of her acquaintances, but poses all the while as the most moral and benevolent of women.

The next persons to call on Lady Sneerwell are Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite, of whom we have already heard. Crabtree sings the fulsome praises of his nephew's wit and poetry, while the latter tries to ingratiate himself with Maria. It is not long, however, before Crabtree, Backbite, Mrs. Candour and Lady Sneerwell are enjoying a spell of scandal mongering, until the chatter veers suddenly round to the subject of Sir Oliver Surface. It appears that Sir Oliver is an uncle of Joseph and Charles Surface ; he has lived in the East Indies for a long while. Some attention must be given to references to Sir Oliver, since he plays an important part in the play. It is subsequently revealed that he is a wealthy man, who has sent liberal sums of money to his nephews, Charles and Joseph.

Charles Surface's profligate way of life comes in for more malicious comment, which Maria finds intolerable ; she rushes from the room, thus giving the worthy persons left behind a further excuse for scandal. Mrs. Candour follows Maria in the pious hope of being able to assist her. Soon Backbite and Crabtree also depart, still industriously engaged in slander.

Joseph and Lady Sneerwell are left alone to close the scene. Lady Sneerwell's curtain-line is significant : "I'll go and plot mischief, and you (Joseph) shall study sentiment."

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Scene II Sir Teazle's House

The scene changes to Sir Peter Teazle's house. Sir Peter is alone, musing on his newly married state. He is elderly, and has been married for six months to a young lady whom he chose with great caution to be his wife. Lady Teazle was country bred and of frugal tastes, yet Sir Peter's brief period of marriage has not been happy. His young wife has quickly become an extravagant woman of fashion, who quarrels incessantly with her husband. Nevertheless Sir Peter loves her, although he does not want this fact known.

Rowley, the ex-steward to the Surface family, enters, and to him Sir Peter confesses that he is not happy. Not only does Lady Teazle's attitude continue to irritate him, but his ward, Maria, persists in favouring the errant Charles in preference to Joseph, who is Sir Peter's choice. Rowley, however, is convinced that Sir Peter is wrong in his good opinion of Joseph. In Rowley's estimation Charles will turn out to be the better of the two young Surfaces. But Sir Peter, who has a profound belief in his own infallibility, does not agree ; he laments the disappointment which is in store for Sir Oliver Surface when he returns from the East and finds that his nephew, Charles, has recklessly dissipated his generous gifts of money. At this, Rowley insists that it is important not to judge Charles unfairly, because Sir Oliver has already arrived in London and intends to put both Charles and Joseph to certain tests in order to discover which of the two is the worthier. Sir Peter is pleased to hear that he will see his old friend again after sixteen years, but he cautions Rowley not to give away to Sir Oliver the fact that Sir Peter's marriage is not a happy one. Sir Peter could not bear to be laughed at by his bachelor friend. Rowley agrees, but there is doubt whether the pretence of a happy marriage can be kept up.

(*Note* : Sir Oliver is occasionally referred to as "Noll" by those intimately connected with him).

ACT II

Scene I Dialogue between Sir Peter & Lady Teazle.

This scene takes the form of a witty dialogue between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, who is now presented for the first time. Husband and wife are quarrelling spiritedly over Lady Teazle's extravagance. Sir Peter's expostulations make little impression upon Lady Teazle, who is an accomplished adversary. She has no intention of curtailing her expenditure or returning to the humbler style of life to which, Sir Peter reminds her, she was accustomed before her marriage. In reply to his charge that she has developed her taste since her marriage, she pertly suggests that, in truth, she could not have any taste to have married him. Even Sir Peter's contempt for her mischievous, scandal mongering friends, leaves her unabashed ; she hastens away to Lady Sneerwell's inviting her husband to join her there.

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Sir Peter's soliloquy after her departure is illuminating; he bears his wife no malice, despite their constant bickering. Indeed, he finds her charming even when she is most irritating: "...I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me."

Lady Sneerwell, Joseph Surface, Candour, Crabtree, Backbite (SP S)

Scene II

At Lady Sneerwell's *The School for Scandal* is already assembled. In addition to Lady Sneerwell herself and Joseph Surface, there are present those three skilful slanderers—Mrs. Candour, Crabtree and Backbite. The company's interest is focussed on an epigram which Sir Benjamin Backbite has invented, and which he is now prevailed upon, not with any considerable difficulty, to repeat. In the midst of the polite acclamation with which Sir Benjamin's composition is received, Lady Teazle and Maria arrive.

Lady Teazle is surprised that Joseph allows himself to be manœuvred by his hostess into playing a card-game with Maria; she expected him to take advantage of Sir Peter's absence to talk to her. This hint from Lady Teazle is our first indication that there is some sort of intrigue going on between her and Joseph Surface.

Being disappointed by Joseph, Lady Teazle is drawn into conversation with the others, a conversation which is inevitably devoted to scandal. The remarks made are outrageous and based on those well-worn topics: What is a woman's real age? How much of her beauty does a woman owe to make up? Nevertheless there is much to laugh at, particularly the description of the widow who chalks her wrinkles and whose make up ends so obviously at her neck "that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique." Lady Teazle, by giving damaging little caricatures of some of her unfortunate acquaintances, reveals that she is as expert at ruining reputations as her associates.

Sir Peter Teazle's entrance hardly interrupts the gallant flow of scandal; he stands amazed at the speed and dexterity with which a person's appearance and reputation are abused. Although the subject is vulgar, the language is elegant and polished; Sheridan has freely bestowed wit and epigram upon his school for scandal; for example, Lady Teazle refers to a certain Lady Stucco as being like the French fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb.

Sir Peter is, at last, constrained to protest at the hypocritical method of Mrs. Candour whose defences of her acquaintances are so destructive of their characters. He takes the opportunity of voicing his disapproval of scandal, explaining how excellent it would be if it were made a crime to invent scandal, or even not to repeat it.

As Lady Sneerwell shepherds her guests into the next room in order to play cards, Sir Peter is approached by a servant who gives him a whispered message, as a result of which he hastens away.

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Only Maria and Joseph are left on the stage. Maria complains that she finds contemptible the malicious society of Lady Sneerwell's guests. Joseph begins with some sympathetic, but hypocritical, moralizing (to propagate a malicious truth wantonly is more despicable than to falsify from revenge") but he soon switches to his real purpose, which is to ask for Maria's affection and favour. Maria, however, firmly tells him to drop the subject, Joseph's contempt for his brother Charles does nothing to improve Maria's attitude, and, in order to mend matters, Joseph goes on his knees to plead with her. It is in this attitude that Lady Teazle finds him, as she enters the room unexpectedly. Perceiving Lady Teazle, Joseph quickly alters his tactics He pretends to be talking to Maria about Lady Teazle. Maria is bewildered, but before she can make any comment Lady Teazle sends her into the next room.

Joseph happens to explain that Maria has come to suspect him of being in love with Lady Teazle, and has threatened to inform Sir Peter ; in order to persuade Maria not to take this course, he had, naturally, to argue on his knees. Lady Teazle is not completely convinced by Joseph's explanation, but he changes the subject and invites her to visit his house to examine his library. It is now made clear that Lady Teazle's association with Joseph has been platonic and innocent of any immorality. She affirms her resolve never to be unfaithful to her husband, and doubts the prudence of visiting Joseph's house alone.

Fearing that she and Joseph will be missed by the other guests, Lady Teazle hastens to rejoin them, leaving Joseph alone, pondering upon the dilemma in which he finds himself. He initially paid his attentions to Lady Teazle only in order to improve his chances of winning the affection of Maria ; he never intended to become Lady Teazle's serious lover, and he finds the present situation embarrassing and dangerous.

Scene III

In Sir Peter Teazle's house, Sir Oliver Surface, newly arrived from the East, is talking to Rowley, who warns him not to make fun of Sir Peter because of his marriage to a young wife. Sir Oliver is surprised that Sir Peter has become so hostile towards Charles Surface, but Rowley explains that Sir Peter has been plagued by jealousy of Charles, whose name has been linked by Scandal with that of Lady Teazle. Rowley discloses, however, that in reality it is probably not Charles but Joseph whom Lady Teazle favours. Sir Oliver gladdens the heart of the honest Rowley by announcing that Charles's extravagance and imprudence alone will not prejudice him against his nephew—only some vice, such as deceit or meanness, will condemn the young man.

Sir Peter arrives, and the two old friends, greet each other warmly. As soon as friendly enquiries have been concluded, Sir Peter gives his opinion that Charles Surface is a lost young man,

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whereas Joseph is honest and deserving. But Sir Oliver is not convinced ; he distrusts Joseph because his character is too good ; he expresses a healthy disgust for Joseph's habit of moralizing. If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. It is Sir Oliver's intention not to pre-judge either of his nephews ; he and Rowley have prepared a plan by which they hope to make both Charles and Joseph unwittingly undergo tests of character ; not until the tests have been carried out will Sir Oliver reach any conclusions about his nephews' qualities.

The three men decide to drink a bottle of wine before Rowley begins to explain the scheme for making the trials.

ACT III

Scene I

Only a short time has elapsed since the events of the preceding scene. Sir Peter, Sir Oliver and Rowley have not yet had their wine. Some person is about to be interviewed, but before he is shown into the room Sir Peter demands to know the details of the scheme by which the young Surfaces are to be put on trial. Rowley explains ; a certain Mr. Stanley, who is related to Charles and Joseph, has become ruined financially and has appealed for help, by letter, to each of the brothers ; and Charles despite his own insolvency has tried to help. Since neither brother has even seen Mr. Stanley, Sir Oliver intends to masquerate as the poor relation begging for help ; the reception given to Sir Oliver by the brothers will provide him with the opportunity of estimating the benevolence of their dispositions. When Sir Peter understands what Sir Oliver intends to do, he questions Rowley about the man waiting to be shown into their presence. The man, whose name is Moses, is sent for, while Rowley continues his explanation Moses is a friendly Jewish money-lender, who has been trying to curb Charles's extravagance, and whom Sir Oliver wishes to question concerning Charles's character. In the course of giving Sir Peter this information Rowley mentions that he will shortly be able to produce evidence that Sir Peter's jealousy of Charles's relationship with Lady Teazle is unfounded.

Moses enters and, answering the questions put to him, reveals how he intends to introduce Charles to a Mr. Premium, a businessman who may be able to advance Charles some money. Charles has never seen Mr. Premium, and this fact gives Sir Peter an idea. He suggests that, if Sir Oliver pretends to be Premium, he will, while interviewing Charles about a loan, have an excellent opportunity to seeing the young man in his true colours. Sir Peter's suggestion is quickly adopted ; Charles will be tested by Sir Oliver masquerading as Premium, and Joseph will receive a visit from a false Mr. Stanley.

Before Sir Oliver and Moses leave for Charles Surface's house there is a short discussion of the manner which Sir Oliver will have

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to adopt in order to pass himself off as a moneylender. This episode gives Sheridan the opportunity to expose, by poking fun at them, the grasping methods of usurers. At last Sir Oliver and Moses depart, leaving Sir Peter and Rowley, who is soon sent to fetch Snake so that Sir Peter may hear what he has to say concerning Charles and Lady Teazle.

Sir Peter is misguidedly contemplating the advisability of discussing with Joseph his suspicions regarding Lady Teazle and Charles, when Maria enters. Availing himself of the occasion, Sir Peter tries to persuade Maria that Joseph is more deserving of her favour than Charles, with whom Sir Peter has forbidden her to correspond. Maria makes it quite clear, however, that Joseph is completely distasteful to her. Finding that his persuasions are not having the desired effect, Sir Peter threatens to use his authority as Maria's guardian, but his ward remains resolute, leaving him alone to complain of the perversity of women.

Lady Teazle is heard approaching, and she is obviously in excellent spirits when she joins Sir Peter. He makes a determined effort to win her affection, granting her request for two hundred pounds, and hinting that he may soon provide her with an independent source of income. Husband and wife are getting on famously when Sir Peter tactlessly blames Lady Teazle for always being the one to start their quarrels. The little seed of irritation thus sown soon growns into a first-class row, in which the contestants insult each other roundly. Pert, rural couquette and old dangling bachelor are two of the epithets which they left fly during this amusing scene. Sir Peter gives voice to his unfounded suspicions concerning Charles Surface, and furiously announces that nothing less than a separation will satisfy him. Lady Teazle does not lose her self control ; throughout the quarrel she remains imperturbable ; she readily agrees to the suggestion of a separation, and gaily leaves her husband. Sir Peter is angry, but what irritates him more than anything else, is the fact that he cannot make his wife lose her temper.

Scene II Charles Surface's house

So far the scenes have been set in either Sir Peter's or Lady Sneerwell's house ; now the action moves to the house of Charles Surface. Sir Oliver and Moses have arrived, in accordance with the plan to discover Charles's true character. Trip, the footman, receives them, and goes to announce to his master that Moses and a certain Mr. Premium are waiting (Note : During the next part of the play those characters who are not privy to Rowley's plan regard Sir Oliver as Mr. Premium. In order to prevent confusion, however, we shall refer to him consistently as Sir Oliver).

While Sir Oliver and Moses are waiting for Trip's return, their conversation reveals that Charles's house was once his father's. After his father's death Charles bought the house from his brother Joseph,

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a fact which influences Sir Oliver in Charles's favour while it increases his dislike for Joseph.

Trip reappears to tell them that Charles is entertaining guests and requires them to wait. The rest of the scene is devoted largely to an exposition of the character of Trip, who is a very fashionable footman, affecting snuff and such gentlemanly expressions as egad and hark "ee". Like his master, Trip wants to raise money, and sounds Moses on the chances of receiving an advance. All Sheridan's characters speak with the same voice, and Trip is no exception ; he talks fluently and with a remarkable knowledge of legal and commercial terms. Sir Oliver displays some indignation that a mere servant should have such affectations and ambitions.

A bell rings. As Trip leads the two callers to meet Charles the scene ends.

Scene III

In this scene the clock is put back a few minutes. While Sir Oliver and Moses wait to be summoned, in another room in the house Charles is entertaining some gentlemen, including Sir Toby Bumper and Careless. All are drinking, and the talk is gay and sometimes witty. The subject of the merry discussion is wine and its effect on conversation, on gambling, and on love. Charles proposes a toast to his favourite lady—someone called Maria, whose surname he will not divulge. Sir Toby replies to Charles's toast by singing the drinking song "Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen" ; the others join in the rousing chorus. As the song is brought to a noisy conclusion, Trip enters to announce the presence of Sir Oliver and Moses, who are soon invited to come in and discuss their business amidst the boisterous company of guests.

Sir Oliver is introduced as Mr. Premium, but is soon in trouble through making a qualification to a toast before drinking to it. As a penalty, he is ordered to drink a pint bumper of wine. Moses protests and so does Sir Oliver himself. Charles comes to the rescue by forbidding the matter to be proceeded with. Regarding Sir Oliver's behaviour's as unsociable, Charles's guests retire to play dice in another room.

Charles briskly gets down to business. He requests a loan and asks on what terms he may obtain the money. Sir Oliver tries to behave like a genuine broker, and the question of security arises. Charles, little thinking that he is talking to Sir Oliver in person, mentions that he has great expectations of inheriting the money from his devilish rich uncle in the East Indies. Sheridan derives much of the comedy of this scene, as of other scenes, from the dramatic irony of the situation. Charles rapidly loses favour in Sir Oliver's eyes as he makes one false statement after another. He claims to be a great favourite of his uncle's ; he states that his uncle is in poor health and

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changed almost beyond recognition ; he asserts authoritatively that his uncle is at that moment in Calcutta.

In order to gain further information of his nephew's character Sir Oliver presses Charles to offer some goods as security for the loan. The old man is shocked to learn that the old family plate and a valuable collection of books have already been sold by Charles. Scarcely anything remains for Charles to sell except the family pictures—a room full of paintings of the Surface ancestors. Sir Oliver declares, aside, Oh, I'll never forgive him this ! never ! Charles, however, in bliss full ignorance of the harm he is doing himself, gaily proposes to sell the pictures by auction. Careless enters, and is pressed into service as the auctioneer. Charles is in great spirits and enthusiastically shepherds Moses and Careless off to the picture room.

ACT IV

Scene I

Charless Picture Room

In Charles's picture-room, in the presence of the portraits of countless Surfaces, the parties to the absurd auction sale dispose themselves. Careless enters with enthusiasm into the role of auctioneer ; for an auctioneer's hammer he uses a chart showing the genealogical tree of the Surface family. Sir Oliver is secretly quivering with indignation at the disrespectful attitude of the young vandals towards the heritage of the Surfaces, but outwardly he gives every appearance of being a financier engaged on a matter of business. The transactions are brisk ; one after another the likenesses of prominent and distinguished ancestors are knocked down for trifling sums, until Charles, growing weary of the process, offers to sell the remainder of the pictures for the lump sum of three hundred pounds. Sir Oliver accepts this offer, but points out that there is one portrait which Charles has persistently passed over. This is, of course, a picture of Sir Oliver himself, painted before he left for India. Charles is strangely loath to part with this painting ; he feels that his uncle has been too good to him. Sir Oliver is enchanted by Charles's sudden show of character ; in his capacity as Premium he presses his nephew to sell the picture, and becomes more and more elated as each new offer is steadfastly refused. I forgive him everything he declares, aside. He hands Charles a draft for eight hundred pounds, which is more than the young spendthrift bargained for. Sir Oliver airily announces that the difference may be balanced at another time, and, now stoutly in favour of his nephew Charles, he and Moses take their leave.

Careless, too, soon departs, leaving Charles alone to contemplate his good luck, and to express his gratitude to the pictures of his ancestors. While Charles is addressing the pictures, Rowley comes into the room.

Rowley is concerned about the sale of the pictures, but Charles does not feel that the matter is one for sorrow. He gives Rowley the draft for eight hundred pounds, telling him to cash it, and to take a

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Hundred pounds of it to Mr. Stanley, the impoverished relative of whom we heard in a previous scene. Rowley, in perturbation, counsels the wiser and more sober disposition of the money to pay some of Charles's many debts. Sheridan, however, was evidently anxious to emphasize Charles's basic good nature, for Rowley's advice is brushed aside with the blatantly sentimental line, while I have, by Heaven I'll give ; so, damn your economy !"

Scene II

This short scene takes place as Sir Oliver and Moses are leaving Charles's house. Sir Oliver is deeply impressed by the fact that Charles would not sell his benefactor's portrait.

Rowley, having just left Charles, joins them. He informs them of Charles's quixotic instruction to give a hundred pounds to Mr. Stanley.

Sir Oliver learns from Rowley that Sir Peter Teazle intends calling on Joseph Surface shortly ; it is therefore advisable that Sir Oliver postpone his visit to Joseph for the purpose of making a trial of his character.

Trip, Charles's footman, calls Moses aside to discuss the possibility of raising money. This interception gives Sir Oliver the opportunity to comment bitterly on the precocious habits of the new generation of servants.

Scene III

This is the famous Screen Scene, often regarded as Sheridan's most successful piece of play writing. It should be noted how the various ambitions and deceptions are exposed, and how some of the separate plots reach a climax in this scene.

The setting for this delightful interplay is the library of Joseph Surface's house. Joseph is expecting a visit from Lady Teazle, whose honour he hopes to compromise so that he will have her in his power. Once he has a hold over Lady Teazle, Joseph intends to force her to help him to obtain the hand in marriage of Maria, the heiress.

A knocking is heard. Before permitting the servant to answer the door, Joseph requires him to place a screen before the window to exclude the inquisitive gaze of a maiden lady living opposite.

Lady Teazle enters ; she complains that her husband has lately been a bad tempered and jealous. Joseph is sympathetic, revealing his true feelings only in asides to the audience. What vexes Lady Teazle more than anything else, is that she has to bear Sir Peter's peevishness and suspicions and the scandalous remarks of her friends

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when in fact she is perfectly innocent of any immoral behaviour. This state of affairs gives Joseph his chance. He insidiously suggests that the remedy against the suspicions of her husband and of society is to do the very thing of which she is suspected ; she must lose her innocence in order to win back her good name. Lady Teazle sums up the paradoxical advice ; "I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation". Lady Teazle is not entirely convinced by Joseph's arguments, but, before he can play further upon her indignation at her husband's jealous ill-temper, a servant enters to announce that Sir Peter himself is on his way up to the library.

For a few moments confusion reigns. Then Lady Teazle hides behind the convenient screen, and Joseph hastily pretends to be reading a book, Sir Peter is completely deceived by the pretence, and even pats Joseph on the back for spending his time in reading. The next part of the scene is rich in dramatic irony, as Sir Peter remarks on the screen and then settles down to ask Joseph's opinion of Lady Teazle's fidelity. Sir Peter suspects that his wife and Charles have been intriguing together, but Joseph, the author of the scandalous reports of Charles's behaviour, hypocritically defends his brother.

Not realizing that his wife can hear every word he says, Sir Peter now confides to Joseph that he intends to provide her with an independent income of eight hundred pounds a year ; furthermore, on his death Lady Teazle will inherit the bulk of his fortune. While he is describing these provisions for his wife's welfare, Sir Peter appears to talk of Lady Teazle with some tenderness and affection, which surely cannot escape the attention of the lady behind the screen.

To Joseph's consternation, Sir Peter begins to question him about the progress of his suit for Maria. Joseph does not want Lady Teazle to know of his ambition to marry Maria, so he agitatedly tries to change the subject. A temporary diversion, however, is caused by the entry of a servant to announce that Charles Surface wishes to see his brother Joseph.

Joseph would rather not see his brother, but Sir Peter suddenly hits upon a plan, and asks Joseph to have his brother come up. When the servant has gone Sir Peter explains his plan ; he will hide somewhere in the library and listen while Joseph questions Charles about his rumoured affair with Lady Teazle ; unaware that Sir Peter is listening, Charles may speak openly to his brother, thus giving Sir Peter an opportunity to discover the truth. Joseph makes feeble protests, but Sir Peter has his heart set upon the scheme and begins to look around for a suitable hiding place. He naturally makes for the screen and is startled to find that there is already some one hidden behind it. He catches a glimpse of a petticoat, but does not discover the wearer's identity. Joseph hastily breaks in and nervously tries to laugh the matter off. He explains that the person behind the screen is a French milliner with whom he has been con-

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ducting an intrigue. On being assured of the lady's discretion, Sir Peter is satisfied and hides himself instead in a convenient closet.

For a short, anxious period before Charles enters Joseph is subjected to the strain of seeing, in turn, the head of one or other of the Teazles pop out of its hiding place to make some indiscreet remark. Fortunately for Joseph, Sir Peter does not suspect that his wife is hidden behind the screen, and Joseph is still the precarious master of the situation when Charles comes in.

Joseph has no difficulty in manoeuvring the conversation with his brother in such a way that Charles makes clear and definite statements to the effect that he is not, and never has been, Lady Teazle's lover. Unfortunately for Joseph, Charles goes on to declare that he has always understood that Joseph was Lady Teazle's favourite. Joseph's frantic attempts at denial only encourage Charles to produce evidence for his belief, until, despairing of any other method of stopping Charles, Joseph disclose that Sir Peter is hidden in the closet, listening to all that is being said.

Charles quickly pulls Sir Peter out of his hiding place and receives his guardian's explanations and apologies for suspecting him. As to the allegations, which Sir Peter may have heard, that Joseph is really the one who has been intriguing with Lady Teazle, Charles gallantly pretends that he made his remarks simply as a joke.

Joseph is called away for a short time to attempt upon Lady Sneerwell downstairs. Reluctantly he leaves Charles and Sir Peter together, enjoining the latter not to mention the French milliner behind the screen. Sir Peter, however, cannot resist telling Charles the secret in order to prove to him, probably unnecessarily, that Joseph is not the complete saint. Once he knows that there is someone behind the screen, nothing can persuade Charles not to take a look. At the very moment of Joseph's return, throws down the screen. The result is consternation.

Charles, revelling in his own innocence, makes a few ribald remarks to the other three, who have apparently been dumbfounded by the shock of discovery. Ironically echoing Sir Peter's words, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment, he leaves them to resolve the tangle.

Joseph finds his tongue at last and begins a laboured and untrue explanation. Lady Teazle, however, far from corroborating his account, exposes him as a liar, and gives, herself, an accurate explanation of her presence behind the screen. She acknowledges that she had been touched by Sir Peter's remarks concerning his affection for her, spoken when he did not know that she was listening. Scornfully denouncing Joseph as a smooth tongued hypocrite, she walks out of the library.

Joseph makes a final, hopeless attempt to convince Sir Peter of his innocence, but Sir Peter has seen the light. He is no longer

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taken in by Joseph's moralizing. You are a villain ! and I leave you to your conscience, he shouts, as the curtain comes down on Joseph's discomfiture.

ACT V

Scene I

Joseph's fall from grace is not yet complete. He is in his library when a servant enters to announce that a Mr. Stanley has called, accompanied by Rowley. Joseph is in no mood to receive a request for charity, but it is too late to avoid seeing his callers. However, just as Sir Oliver (Stanley) and Rowley enter, Joseph makes a temporary departure in order to compose himself for the interview.

Rowley tells Sir Oliver that Joseph has given the impression of being a benevolent man in theory, but not in practice, his greatest concern evidently being for his own welfare rather than for anyone else's. Hearing Joseph coming back, Rowley prepares to go, disclosing that he will return later to tell Joseph that his uncle Oliver has arrived from the East.

Joseph, finds Sir Oliver alone, and, although he takes the old man for Stanley, he lavishes an elaborate welcome upon him, being careful, however, to stress his own poverty and inability to help his poor relation. Sir Oliver steers his own poverty and inability to help his poor relation. Sir Oliver steers the conversation round to the subject of the generous sums of money which he sent Joseph from the East, but Joseph claims to have received little of value. He also pretends that he has lent his brother Charles so much money that he cannot now afford to give assistance to "Mr. Stanley". Having smoothly and deceitfully avoided any obligation of charity, Joseph prepares to rid himself of his unwelcome visitor. After a protracted exchange of insincere civilities, Sir Oliver goes but not before he has declared, in a resounding aside, that Charles, not Joseph, will be his heir.

Unaware that he has blundered badly, Joseph is patting himself on the back for establishing the reputation for being benevolent, without incurring any of the liabilities. Rowley enters and hands him a note which contains the information that Sir Oliver Surface has arrived in England, and intends to call upon Joseph within the next quarter of an hour. Joseph naturally regards his uncle's arrival at such an awkward time the cruellest piece of ill-fortune, but for Rowley's benefit he puts on a brave face.

Scene II

The remarkable events which took place in Joseph's library when Lady Teazle was discovered behind the screen haven, not, of course, escaped the notice of the busy colony of scandal-mongers. In

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this scene they come clamouring to Sir Peter Teazle's house, partly to enjoy juicy morsels of scandal, partly to gloat at the effect of the scandal upon the Teazle.

Mrs. Candour is first upon the scene, followed shortly afterwards by Sir Benjamin Backbite and Lady Sneerwell. Each tells a different garbled and absurd version of what took place in Joseph's house. Each insists that his or her fanciful account is most accurate. Crabtree confuses the story still more when he enters by giving yet another description of the scene. Although his version bears no more resemblance to the truth than do the others, he garnishes it with the most minute details, extending even to a description of the flight of a bullet, alleged to have been fired by Sir Peter, which glanced off a statue of Pliny and wounded a postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

Lady Sneerwell, concerned that these revelations and unmaskings may be detrimental to her ambitions for Charles's favour, hastens away to discover to true facts of the happenings in Joseph's house.

Shortly afterwards Sir Oliver enters. Being carried away by their own false reports that Sir Peter has been wounded by Charles, Backbite and his associates mistake Sir Oliver for a doctor. The highly coloured and contradictory rumours of Sir Peter's injury, however, are soon disposed of, when Sir Peter himself walks into the room. Nothing daunted by this exposure of their neglect for the truth, Backbite, Crabtree and Mrs. Candour offer their impertinent and insincere sympathy to Sir Peter for his wife's infidelity. But Sir Peter is in no humour for scandalous conversation. He orders the three slanderers out of his house. Although they go promptly, they are quite unperturbed by Sir Peter's obvious disfavour, and, as they take their leave, they continue to voice hypocritically sympathetic sentiments.

Rowley joins Sir Peter and Sir Oliver, and for a short period Sir Peter has to endure having fun poked at him by the other two, who ridicule his mistaken judgment of Joseph and recall his humiliation in the Screen Scene. Rowley advises Sir Peter to effect a reconciliation with Lady Teazle, at which Sir Oliver announces his intention of returning to Joseph's house to unmask Joseph's hypocrisy. He wishes Sir Peter and Lady Teazle to be present at this scene. Sir Oliver sets off to carry out his plan, leaving Rowley and Sir Peter discussing Lady Teazle, whom they can see weeping in the next room. Sir Peter is assured by Rowley that the letter which he found, purporting to be from Lady Teazle to Charles Surface, was a forgery. Encouraged by Rowley, Sir Peter prepares to go to his wife so that they may be reconciled.

Scene III

Lady Sneerwell, anxious to know what damage has been done

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to her carefully laid plan to win Charles's love, has hastened for information to the house of her confederate, Joseph. What she has learnt does not please her, and she bitterly criticizes Joseph for being a blunderer who has ruined a good piece of roguery by trying to achieve too many ends. Joseph, however, pinning his faith on their agent Snake, feels that he still has the power to destroy Maria's faith in Charles and to provide Lady Sneerwell with the opportunity to ensnare his brother. The arrival of Sir Oliver at the front door interrupts Joseph's plotting, and drives Lady Sneerwell to hide in an adjoining room.

Joseph, on seeing Sir Oliver, naturally takes him for Mr. Stanley. Not wishing to be bothered by needy relates when his uncle Oliver is due to arrive at any moment, Joseph tries to push Mr. Stanley out. At this point Charles arrives. He, of course, recognizes Sir Oliver as Premium, the broker, and, on being reminded by Joseph of uncle Oliver's impending visit, Charles too becomes anxious to get rid of Premium. In consequence, when Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Maria and Rowley enter, they behold the extraordinary sight of the two nephews trying to eject their uncle by force.

In a very short while it becomes clear to Charles and Joseph that their uncle has been making a trial of their qualities. They are neither of them hopeful of the result. Sir Oliver and Sir Peter compare notes on the character of Joseph, and declare him to be dishonest, mean, ungrateful, treacherous and hypocritical.

Attention is then turned to Charles, who does not attempt to exercise his light hearted auction sale of the family portraits, but contents himself with saying how glad he is to see his uncle Oliver again. He is, no doubt, surprised when his uncle declares, in a cordial and approving tone, that he has forgiven him.

Lady Teazle prepares to bring Maria and Charles together, but Maria startles everyone by rejecting the offer of reconciliation. Charles does not love her, she states, but Lady Sneerwell. On the mention of Lady Sneerwell's name, Joseph espies an opportunity to discredit his brother and put himself in a more favourable light. He brings Lady Sneerwell out of her hiding-place into the presence of the surprised company, where she upbraids Charles for being an unfaithful lover.

The evidence of Mr. Snake is called for, not, as Joseph supposes, to corroborate Lady Sneerwell's suggestions, but to prove them false. Snake, it seems, has decided to tell the truth; he explains to Lady Sneerwell that his honesty has been obtained by the offer of a large bride. Lady Sneerwell is furious at the collapse of her plot, and she prepares to leave the scene of her defeat. Before she goes, however, Lady Teazle addresses some remarks to her, indicating that she (Lady Teazle) rejects the careful training in scandal-mongering which she has received from Lady Sneerwell and her School for Scandal; henceforth Lady Teazle will be careful not to defame the

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reputations of others. Lady Sneerwell, in trying to be as unplesant as possible to Lady Teazle, fails to realize that Sir Peter and his young wife are in love with each other ; May your husband live these fifty years ! is her sour parting short.

Joseph, now that his schemes have come to naught, pretends to have only the best intentions, and hastens after Lady Sneerwell, perhaps to carry out Sir Oliver's suggestion...marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and Vinegar, egad ! you'll do very well together.

Snake extracts a strange undertaking from those present. He does not want it know that he has performed an honest action. He makes his living by dishonesty, and a suggestion of goodness in his character would ruin him.

Nothing remains now but to arrange a marriage between Charles and Maria, who have already been exchanging significant looks. Rowley is thanked for his efforts to save Charles's reputation ; Charles and Maria receive the good wishes of all. Charles makes no promises to reform, but gracefully points out that his wife will be his gentle guide ; he brings the play to a close with a few lines of verse expressing the moral that love is proof against even the corrosion of scandal.

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13

Scene-wise Critical Commentary on the Play

A PORTRAIT

These "verses", some 122 lines, accompanied the play that Sheridan presented to Mrs. (afterward, Lady) Crewe. They could be considered a sort of dedication of the play. As in all dedications of the period, the praise of the lady is excessive and insincere by our standards. It was, however, the conventional pattern, then, as it had been for many years. It would not have seemed excessive for Sheridan's contemporaries ; the question of sincerity would not even have occurred to them. The references Sheridan makes to the play are mainly to the scandalmongers in action. Apparently he considered them the most interesting part of the play.

PROLOGUE

The prologue was written by the great actor David Garrick, himself a dramatist of considerable repute. It would seem that for Garrick, as for Sheridan, the most important parts of the play were the scandalmongering scenes ; he devoted his entire prologue to them, despite their tenuous relationship to the plot.

ACT I

Scene I

In both this play and *The Rivals*, the exposition in the opening scene is clumsy. Exposition must always be contrived, for, when the curtain first rises, their is no natural way to convey information. Some dramatists, like Congreve, were too subtle ; in his way as the world, exposition was so gradual that audiences were left bewildered. Sheridan erred by being too obvious. We are told of Lady Sneerwell's plan to marry Charles ; we are told of Joseph's plan to marry Maria, who loves Charles ; and most important, we are told that Joseph is a thorough hypocrite. This information is conveyed in the most direct fashion possible : Lady Sneerwell tells Snake things that he probably knows already.

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Joseph is the sentimental hypocrite, while Maria has precisely the right amount of sentiment. "For my part——wit loses its respect with me, when I see it in company with malice." No Restoration heroine could have made this statement. After Joseph mouths a pious and much too flowery piece of hypocrisy, Lady Sneerwell, more honest in her mischief-making, comments : "There's no possibility of being witty without a little ill nature ; the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick."

The brilliant scene that follows was a part of the original play, The Slanderers. Each member of the group is characterized by his ticket name, and then in a series of speeches each one proves the appropriateness of the ticket name with which Sheridan supplied him. Lady Sneerwell first expresses the motto of the club. Then each member proceeds to prove its rightness.

The scene can, incidentally, present an excellent opportunity for the modern costumer, designer, and director. The mass of colour, the grouping of the characters, and the movement as the conversation shifts, with each of the scandalmongers in turn taking the center of the stage to top the others in wit and malice, should form a striking and effective scene. By the time the scene ends, the actors should have conquered the audience completely.

It is worth commenting on the changes in Snake that Sheridan made in the course of composition. In earlier versions he was a journalist. In the play as we know it, a connection with journalism is only suggested. Many newspapers of the day were given to vicious gossip that, it must be admitted, was often accurate. Sheridan was therefore engaged in specific satire when he created Snake ; one can only speculate on why he chose to soften the attack on journalists.

Scene II

The old man who foolishly marries a young girl is a traditional comic figure. Sir Peter followed the classic pattern : he married a young country girl who had no knowledge of fashionable life. Of course, after her first taste of it, she embraced it enthusiastically. To this extent, the situation is similar to that in Wycherley's The country Wife, but the student interested in tracing the differences in attitude during a century may find it fruitful to compare the Teazles with the Pinchwifes in Wycherley's play, written about 1673. He will find that Sheridan takes a more kindly attitude toward his characters. Lady Teazle is very different from the overeager young woman ; Teazle's love is genuine, embracing affection and even a fatherly understanding. Pinchwife is a lecherous old man. There is no doubt that Wycherley and his audiences all felt that Pinchwife deserved whatever indignity might be imposed on him.

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ACT II

Scene I

In Sheridan's plays, there are no weak lines in duels between characters. Lady Teazle, unlike the usual pattern of the country girl become city wife, has considerable wit. Although Sir Peter is right in his objections, Lady Teazle is universally loved by audiences: and so Sheridan intended it. The audience loves her for the deftness and skill with which she counters her husband's strictures. She is always in control of the situation. In production, she must always, look most charming when she is quarrelling; as Sir Peter says, "She never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me." This line with its clear instruction has made the part of Lady Teazle a very popular role with great commediennes.

Scene II

The slander scenes are the most brilliant in a comedy where all dialogue is brilliant, but it should be noted that they lend little to the plot. Lady Sneerwell's comment that wit requires the touch of malice is clearly justified. Sir Peter expresses his horrified admiration for their impartial malice, "This, their own relation!" and later, "a person they dine with twice a week." Most of the time, the pack slanders people who have no part in the play.

This scene also shows the essentially kindly attitude of Sir Peter to his young wife. Despite his concern about her behaviour, he does not try to prevent her moving in company. She does not have to disguise herself to see the world of fashion. The dramatist is, in turn, kind to Sir Peter. Traditionally, the old man married to a young wife would have deserved her unfaithfulness, but Lady Teazle's virtue is preserved by the dramatist's decision. She wants a lover only so as to be fashionable. Sheridan's revolt against the spirit of sentimentalism was only partial; he maintained the attitude of sexual morality, that was common in the drama, if not the life, of the eighteenth century.

Scene III

Sir Oliver is, presumably, the shrewd businessman who knows human nature. Such knowledge requires a little cynicism. Sir Oliver is cynical about Sir Peter's marriage, and he considers his nephews' behaviour with a realistic eye. If "everybody in the world speaks well of" someone, then that man has "bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue." He hates to see "prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth——(it) spoils the growth of the tree."

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ACT III

Scene I

It is characteristic of satire that it attacks everything it touches, so that a satiric approach always applies to both sides of any argument. While a satire on moneylenders is hardly a major theme in *The School for Scandal*, the scenes with Moses display an irony that is more than double-edged. It would be easy to portray Moses as a monster, but Sheridan does not. Usury is attacked, but so are the people who are its willing, and even enthusiastic, victims. Sir Oliver obviously does not approve of Moses ; but it is a greater shock to him to discover that Mr. Premium, whom he is replacing, is a Christian. By implication, irony is directed at those Englishmen who would undertake such a profession, and at those who are too complacent to believe that an Englishman would engage in such a profession.

The word prevented from marrying against the wishes of her guardian is an old device, one that Sheridan himself also used in *The Rivals*. The scene between Sir Peter and Maria shows differences between this play and plays of the Restoration. Maria is not as rebellious at his choice of a husband ; Sir Peter is not as violent at her recalcitrance.

A clue to the scenes between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle lies in his final speech in this scene, "But I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper." Lady Teazle is not in love with Sir Peter ; because she is not deeply involved, she has an advantage in the recurring domestic squabbles. She is suave, urbane and, to the audience, delightfully self-indulgent.

Scene II

Trip is a comic type that Sheridan used in other plays, including *The Rivals* : the servant who copies the manners, especially the vices, of his master. His postures, like his clothes, are, after all, hand-me-downs.

Apparently perfunctory, this scene contains an element of suspense. We are waiting to see how the brothers will perform in their tests. Our sympathies are with Charles, who is already losing ground to Joseph.

Scene III

Although we have heard a great deal about Charles, he appears for the first time in this scene. There is perhaps some burden on the actor ; Charles is so long awaited that it is difficult for him to live up to expectations. The somewhat unusual play structure have may be due to the fact that this play was put together from the two "sketches"——The Slanderers and The Teazles. We might guess

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that in an earlier age the party which the moneylenders interrupt would have included soke women of ambiguous, or quite unambiguous morals.

There is obvious humour in the scene while Charles talks about his uncle, to his uncle. Since Moses knows who Mrs. Premium is, there is opportunity for considerable by-play ; Moses may try to stop Charles as the same time that he abets Sir Oliver.

ACT IV

Scene I

The scene offers many opportunities for ingenious by-play, and the actors and director should take advantage of them : Charles as auctioneer ; Sir Oliver's reactions, and Moses' reactions as he sees Charles, once in his life, make the right move.

Charles displays the kind of sentimentalism that Sheridan accepts and approves. He does not mouth pious platitudes, but he makes the generous gesture, commits the act of kindness that is not prudent but reveals the kindly heart. It is probably beside the point to question the ethics of his generosity when Charles has so many debtors who, he admits, have just, prior claims on the money.

The ironic attitude to usury is developed further in this scene. The casual good-natured contempt Charles shows for the moneylender is the same kind of contempt Trip showed earlier, although Trip displayed less good manners. But Charles is headed for bankruptcy, and Moses is just as clearly about to found a banking dynasty. It is an open question which of the two feels the greater contempt for the other.

It is interesting to speculate how long Sheridan played with the idea for this scene. In *The Rivals*, Sir Lucius O'Trigger says at one point (Act III, Scene IV) "Though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipped through my fingers——our honour and the family-pictures are as fresh as ever."

Scenes II & III

It is evident that the "screen scene" is the most important single scene in the whole play. It is also one of the most famous in English comedy. It includes almost the entire plot of the Lady Teazle-Peter Teazle-Joseph Surface triangle. At scene's end, the comic villain is unmasked ; he loses prospects of inheritance, of a likely mistress, of a wealthy wife ; he is about to lose public reputation and become the subject for the next meeting of the scandalmongers. Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, we may hope, will be reconciled and will achieve a workable, if not idyllic, marriage.

The screen scene would be interesting simply because so many

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things are happening. The wealth of comic devices makes it more than just interesting. The indiscreet lady hidden behind the screen, the husband hidden in the closet, the husband gleeful over the woman hidden behind the screen all border on farce, with an ironic attack directed at Sir Peter. The revelation and the subsequent moral ascendance of the man who has been thought a scapegrace is effective.

At a different level, the argument used by Joseph in his attempt to seduce Lady Teazle has its own satiric value. The sentimental pretense is discarded ; he is, in one sense, right. The commentary on society is not without justice. It is a plausible justification of hypocrisy that the world gives credence to the pretense of virtue more easily than to virtue itself. "Your prescription is that I must sin in my own defense, and part with my credulous and convinced, Lady Teazle, the action must show, is likely to succumb under his argument. Her virtue is saved by the entrance of Sir Peter—and the goodwill of a dramatist. Joseph's passion for the woman he is trying to seduce is also a pretense. It is simple business. He must have Lady Teazle in his power before breaking the news to her that he wants to marry Maria. In turn, he does not love Maria, but wants to marry her only for her fortune.

The scene contains much sentimentalism of which Sheridan approves. Sir Peter's solution of the problem of a demanding wife is to win her gratitude with acts of generosity. She, in her turn, displays a typical sentimental reformation. Overcome by his kindness she repents, happily before sinning. The most obvious single line, however, to show the difference between the Restoration and the eighteenth-century comedy of manners is probably Charles's statement. If a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way, and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father...I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your (Joseph's) Morality..." No such attitude is to be found in Wycherley or Congreve.

The scene also made a contribution to standard sentimental dramaturgy that was adopted by succeeding playwrights. Among the least satisfying of all sentimental cliches was the fifty act repentance of those who might be straying from narrow paths of virtue. Such sudden fits of remorse were not always convincing because there was no satisfactory motivation. Lady Teazle is motivated with some plausibility. She has overheard enough to see through the fascinating young man and enough to arouse distaste for her scandalmonger friends. And she has overheard enough to understand how kindly and generous a man her lonesuffering husband is. The eavesdropper who hears things that show him the light became common in sentimental drama after this play.

ACT V

Scene I

The scene depends on a comic device that Sheridan used many

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times ; we know who Sir Oliver is, and Joseph is managing to say all the wrong things. It is interesting to consider the good-byes the two men say to each other, each pretending, each certain that he has successfully tricked the other.

Scene II

The gathering of the scandalmongers, like every scene in which they appear, is highly successful. We can watch rumours grow as they talk.

The scene between Sir Oliver and Sir Peter, while highly effective comedy, may seem a little odd to our taste. We would probably consider Sir Oliver cruel. Sir Oliver is laughing heartily ; Sir Peter finds it very difficult to see any humour in the situation. Sir Oliver changes his attitude shortly, however, and Rowley as usual, soothes everyone. This scene brings the Teazle's plot to its conclusion.

Scene III

The scene, like many other final scenes of a play, is huddled. Lady Sneerwell's and Joseph Surface's last attempt to plot is a weak effort from such accomplished intriguers. It is difficult to see any logical reason for Lady Teazle to appear in Joseph's house. The culmination of the love of Charles and Maria is handled as if Sheridan wants to get the matter over with. It is perhaps worth mentioning that in the original Slanderers there was a scene in the middle of the play where Rowley forced Snake (Then, Spatter) to confess his slanderous activities. It is refreshing that Snake does not reform : "If it were once known that I had been betrayed in to an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world."

Despite the hasty of loose ends, Sheridan has managed to discover opportunities for laughing comedy in the situation. There is farce in the treatment accorded to Sir Oliver by the brothers before they discover that he is their uncle, and in their shock when they learn the truth.

EPILOGUE

The epilogue was written by George Colman the elder, a play-wright and theater-manager of the time. Spoken by the actress who plays Mrs. Teazle, it is all a humorous commentary on her reform, and ends with a nice moral.

Many such epilogues at that time might have poked fun at Lady Teazle's reform : since Colman was one of the sentimental writers of the day, the final approving lines are hardly surprising.

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Characters in the Play

(1) CHARLES SURFACE

In the Tradition of Fielding

Charles and Joseph Surface show obvious resemblances to Tom Jones and Young Blifil in Fielding's novel, although it might be an overstatement to say that the brothers are based on Fielding. Fielding's Tom Jones displayed a considerable opposition to sentimentalism, but by the time Sheridan wrote *The School for Scandal*, there had developed out of Tom Jones a type that was a fitting addition to the gallery of sentimental portraits. Charles is the outgoing, very human, young man of good heart, generous impulses, human kindliness, and the normal tendency to his wild oats and make the mistakes that a young man should be expected to make. The difference between Charles and Tom Jones becomes one of details and emphasis. Charles's wild oats are rather tame. He is kept from adultery or the spoiling of virgins, and his generous impulses loom large.

An Extravagant Spendthrift

Charles was recognized by everyone as an extravagant spendthrift. Lady Sneerwell, in the first scene of the play, admits that she loves Charles "that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation." Sir Peter Teazle obviously feels the characterization is just. We do not meet C[illegible]rles until Act III, Scene II, and then we discover the limits [illegible]e dispassion that Sheridan permitted his hero. Charles is pla[illegible] host at a men's party, at a time that he is short of money. [illegible]ne device that saves him his uncle's displeasure is a now famous piece of sentimentalism worthy of Cumberland : he will not sell the picture of his uncle because "the old fellow has been very good to me...I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in." This is followed immediately after by a piece of generosity of a highly sentimental variety : he sends 100 pounds of his new-gained funds to Stanley for his "wants are pressing" before some one calls "that has a better right to the money." Moses summarizes : "Ah ! there is the pity of tall ; he is so damned charitable."

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Sheridan actually chooses to whitewash Charles completely. Tom Jones could never pass up an opportunity offered by any woman, and this is what Sir Peter believes of Charles. But Charles's own comment, already quoted, reveals the difference : "If a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way, and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father...Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your (Joseph's) morality."

His Lack of Sensibility

Small incidents hint at a heartier young man. Charles shows some lack of sensibility in the screen scene. When Sir Peter Teazle tells him that Joseph has a little milliner hidden in the apartment, no delicacy inhibits his natural curiosity as he puts aside the screen. When Lady Teazle is revealed, no excessive sympathy prevents his taunting both Sir Peter and his brother.

In brief, Charles is the natural, rather wild, but basically good-hearted young man, but with his wildness carefully controlled by the author so as to display a sentiment and a morality that the latter part of the century found acceptable.

(2) JOSEPH SURFACE

A Hypocrite

It is obvious that Joseph Surface is the complete hypocrite, and the difference between the brothers, we might say, is not the difference between sentimentalism and realism, but the difference between genuine sentiment and hypocrisy. Examination of the play, however, reveals that Joseph is not a very successful hypocrite. Sir Peter Teazle is, in fact, the only person who is taken in by him. It is his repeated characterization of Surface that gives the impression of successful hypocrisy, " 'Tis edification to hear him converse ; he professes the noblest sentiments." "Your brother (*i.e.* Charles) has no sentiment, you never hear him talk so," and again, "what a difference there is between you ! What noble sentiments !" "He is a man of sentiment. Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment." But Joseph does not deceive anyone else. Lady Sneerwell has seen through him completely, and they are now colleagues in fooling Rowley, and he does not manage to deceive Sir Oliver for even a short time.

His Love of Money

Traditionally a character fulfilling Joseph's role would, among other villainous characteristics, display an illicit lust. Although it would have been simple to incorporate such motives into Joseph's attitudes to both Maria and Lady Teazle, Sheridan did not see fit to do so. Joseph's major vice is a love of money. He has, apparently,

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no love, licit or illicit, for Maria ; he only wants to marry an heiress. And his affair with Lady Teazle is accounted for in terms quite different from lust. "I wanted, at first, only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle that she might not be my enemy with Maria ; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover." He makes a real attempt to seduce Lady Teazle only because he is afraid of her reactions when she discovers that he wishes to marry Maria "but she must by no means be let into that secret—at least, till I have her more in my power." His motives, therefore, are simply economic.

As a conspirator he is not effective ; the plan in the fifth act is not a very good one, and it fails. Finally, we know of most of his villainy only because it is made clear that he is a villain. What is displayed amply is conscious hypocrisy and avarice.

A Character Beyond the Dramatist's Control

In the play, "Characterization" includes the interpretation of the role on stage. As this differs from actor to actor, even from performance to performance, much of the characterization is beyond the dramatist's control. The dramatist, however, does supply ample clues to indicate how he wants the part to be played ; these are our legitimate concern when analyzing the published play. A too casual reading of the screen scene may result in our missing the full flavour of Sheridan's creation and in our thinking of the screen scene as one in which villainy is frustrated, without realizing the extent of the comedy in Joseph's role.

A Comic Villain

Joseph is a comic villain and his attempts to juggle an increasingly complicated situation are comic. As he begins his siege of Lady Teazle's virtue, he is a detached, objective technician. Passion is not a part of his temperament. But Lady Teazle is a very attractive young woman. As he seems about to achieve some success, he loses his detachment and becomes an obviously salacious young man and a little more human in the process. At just the point when he expects to gain his now double ends, seduction for its own sake and seduction for power, Sir Peter is announced. Joseph's frustration in the scramble to hide Lady Teazle may be played as broadly as the actor and director may wish and as current taste may sanction.

His Comic Frenzy

In the conversation with Sir Peter, Joseph reveals increasing comic frenzy as Sir Peter examines the screen and then proceeds blindly to destroy the structure of deceit his host has so carefully built. Joseph's discomfort reaches a second plateau as Charles is announced. Sir Peter wants to hide behind the screen, but just barely catches a glimpse of a woman's skirt before he is pushed into a closet. With the Teazles precariously screened and closeted, Joseph barely maintains some self-control as Charles proceeds to complete

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the destruction which Sir Peter had started. Before Joseph tells his brother, in desperation, that Sir Peter is in the closet, he has frantically tried in speed and pantomime to get his unobservant guest to stop talking. Charles, of course, notices nothing because his heart is pure. By the time Lady Teazle is discovered, Joseph is perhaps near to tears, a frustrated, dishevelled, and exhausted young man.

For the audience, Joseph is now a comic figure. Sheridan has prevented any possibility that his villain will lend a quality of dread to a light, although satiric, comedy.

(3) SIR PETER TEAZLE

The middle-aged man who marries a young wife is, in drama, doomed to be perpetually concerned about his wife's faithfulness, and he has only himself to blame. In addition Sir Peter is the man who is always wrong in his judgment of the brothers. He is the admirer of sentiment.

Unlike his Restoration prototypes, Sir Peter does not make any attempt to keep his wife from knowledge of London society life ; he is far more prepared to trust her virtue and her good sense. His basic approach is to win her with kindness ; instead of punishing her, he will give her the allowance she wants. His feeling for her is a blend of love and affection, and a kind of fatherly understanding. In sum, his character is changed from the traditional lecherous, suspicious old man into a something far more commendable.

(4) LADY TEAZLE

Intoxicated with City-Life

Traditionally the country miss who marries an older man is a hoyden. Lady Teazle, when we meet her, is well beyond this point. She has become a very charming, very lovely young woman who has taken her place in London society. She is, of course, completely intoxicated with city life, clothes, visiting, and gossip—all activities that she did not learn at home. Up to a point, her affair with Joseph Surface moves along the expected path,—she is flattered by the attentions of a worldly and handsome young man. But she is not naive enough to succumb. When she perhaps might, the spirit of the times and the goodwill of the author conspire to preserve her virtue.

Her Personality and Will-Power

Lady Teazle has, in addition, a quality of her own that keeps her from being just one more country miss in English comedy. As the scene with Sir Peter indicates, she has a personality and a will. The basic reason is clear—she is one of the most important vehicles

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for Sheridan's wit. Without her daily "Jangle" with Sir Peter, this would be a duller play.

A Complex Character

Although Sheridan has supplied Lady Teazle with lines enough to create a character, complete, a great deal must still depend on the way this part is played, especially in the screen scene. The first problem of interpretation is this : is Lady Teazle moving toward succumbing to Joseph's blandishments ? Can she be taking seriously his paradoxical argument that ladies who slip slightly have the best reputations ? And if she is shown as moving toward surrender, is she then convinced ? Or is she actually aware that the argument is specious but is accepting it because the idea of an adventure with a sophisticated young man fascinates her ? If the correct interpretation is the last, she becomes a complex comic character, laughing at her lover and herself at the time that she accedes, or is ready to accede, to his villainy. In all cases, she is the young lady playing with fire and we must feel delighted that she does not get burnt.

(5) SIR OLIVER SURFACE

There is little to Sir Oliver that is not fully accounted for by the needs of the role. He is the noble gentleman returned from India. The plot demands that he be shrewd enough to see through Joseph and that he have human vanity enough to be pleased that Charles does not sell his picture. Such a man, we might suppose, was Teazle before he made mistake of marrying a young wife.

(6) TRIP

Servants play a far more important role in *The Rivals* than in this play. Trip conforms to the pattern established by Fag : he plays the fop and is a burlesque exaggeration of his master's vices. He too is in debt and is trying to borrow money.

(7) MOSES

His Canting Speech

The character of Moses needs some comment. It is probable that many Jews were moneylenders ; it is unlikely that Sheridan intended the broadest kind of burlesques here, although the stage tradition is that Moses used a canting speech.

A Money-Lender

In interpreting the role, the actor has decisions to make for which there is no certain guide in the lines. Does Sheridan intend Moses to have some realization of Charles's Sterling's worth ? Such

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an insight would not prevent the moneylender from pursuing his regular trade, but it would provide opportunity for a great deal of meaningful business, especially when Moses "helps" Charles lie about his prospects and helps Sir Oliver lie about himself. He would display chagrin when Charles does the wrong thing, he would attempt to cut him off as he talks about his uncle, and he would display some delight as Charles finally stumbles on the exactly right thing to do.

Sheridan would not have passed up so valid an opportunity to heighten the comedy. In addition, one important line, quoted before, would become more meaningful. Moses' line, "Ah ! there is the pity of it all ; he is so damned charitable," is a highly ironic line even if Moses is completely oblivious to the implications of the observation. If Moses does have mixed feelings about Charles, however, then the irony is considerably enriched his awareness that Charles's vice is also his virtue, and he finds that he disapproves and admires at the same time.

Used for Satiric Attack

Sheridan also uses Moses for satiric attack on the Christian moneylender. Sir Oliver can play the part of Mr. Premium, for Mr. Premium is Christian—and it would not be amiss for him to ride up in his own carriage. At the same time, Charles Surface or even Trip can think of himself as superior to the moneylender, who is actually in every way the more solid member of society.

(8) MARIA

It is difficult to see any character in Maria. She is completely the ingenue with the good taste to prefer Charles over Joseph from the start. Although *The Rivals* does not attain the height of comic brilliance and satire supplied by the scandalmongers and the May-and-December marriage, it does not have characters as weak as Maria and Rowley.

(9) LADY SNEERWELL

Lady Sneerwell's part is somewhat unsatisfactory, probably because of the history of the composition of the play. She is barely shown as scheming, and her fifty act appearance is weak. Her most important function in the play, as it stands, is to set the theme for the "school" for scandal : that wit depends upon some malice. *The Slanderers* supplies the information needed to understand what her part was first intended to be before it was considerably cut. She was a machinating villainess, with the typical inadequate justification : "Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation." She actually manipulated Maria (her ward) and Clerimont (Charles)

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to try to win Charles for herself and to palm off Maria on Sir Benjamin Crabtree (Changed into two characters in the combined, final version).

(10) SNAKE

Like Lady Sneerwell, Snake suffered in the process of the composition of the final play. His part was reduced ; a scene of confrontation with Rowley was deleted. He belongs to the long tradition of tool villains, but is a rather weak one. Like everyone else in the play, he has good lines.

(11) THE "CHORUS"

With Lady Sneerwell, the characters Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, and Sir Benjamin Backbite form the slanderers' club, The School for Scandal. They are not characterized beyond their ticket names, and they need not be. All their speeches show the characteristics described by their names. Their scenes are by many considered to be the wittiest in English comedy.

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Plot

Two Earlier Plays Combined

Sheridan had worked for some time on two "Sketches," *The Slanderers* and *The Teazles*, which he afterward combined into the play we know as *The School for Scandal*, but the two plays were never completely integrated.

In *The Slanderers*, Lady Sneerwell is Maria's guardian. She is actively engaged in devious intrigue to break up the love affair between Maria and Clerimont (Charles, in our play) and to gain him for herself. By the time *The School for Scandal* reached the stage, Lady Sneerwell's love-plot is reduced to the point where it is mentioned in the first act and appears again in the fifty when she makes a feeble attempt at intrigue. One of the members of the group of gossips in *The Slanderers* formed a part of two linked love-triangles, but he has no part in the plot of *The School for Scandal.* In *The Teazles*, two brothers courted a lady named Maria. In some drafts, she was the ward of Teazles ; in others, the niece of his wife. Young Pliant (he becomes Joseph) tries to seduce Lady Teazle, and also loves, or at least woos, Maria. This plot is retained but considerably altered in detail.

Anomalies in the Plot

Perhaps because the two different "Sketches" were combined, there are these anomalies in *The School for Scandal* :

1. Lady Sneerwell's plot is only mentioned.
2. The gossips supply brilliant scenes, but have almost no part in the plot.
3. The hero of the play, the young lover, is not introduced until Act III, Scene III. His counterparts appeared very early in both "Sketches."
4. Strangely enough, the lovers, Charles and Maria, never meet on stage until the last scene of the play.

Double Plot

The play, as it now stands, has a double plot. The two parts

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are, as is usual, loosely tied together. One plot is concerned with the Teazles' domestic life ; the other, with two brothers, Joseph and Charles Surface, the elder, is a hypocritical mouther of noble sentiments, while Charles is a careless, but openhearted and generous young man. Related to the tale of the brothers are a love-triangle and an attempt by a worldy woman to trap Charles into marriage. Neither of these plot complications is fully developed.

The Plot Analysed

Joseph Surface, the hypocritical brother ; wishes to marry Maria, the wealthy ward of Sir Peter Teazle. As she is in love with Charles, Joseph decides to speed Charles's financial ruin. He conspires with Lady Sneerwell, who knows that Joseph is a hypocrite and believes that Charles will of necessity eventually turn to her for she is wealthy.

Sir Peter Teazle, late in life, married a young girl from the country, for he thought a woman unaccustomed to city extravagances would make a more dutiful wife. Unfortunately Lady Teazle adjusted all too eagerly to fashionable city life. At the home of Lady Sneerwell she met Joseph Surface, and was intrigued by him. Although she has not consented to an affair, she does enjoy playing with fire. As a part of the plot to discredit Charles, Lady Sneerwell has spread the rumour that he and Lady Teazle are having an affair.

Both brothers are supported by the generous bounty of an unmarried uncle in India. He now returns to England without their knowledge and prepares to test them to decide who shall be his heir. Sir Peter, his old friend, is completely taken in by Joseph ; Rowley, an old family retainer, distrusts Joseph and feels Charles is the better of the two.

They first test Charles. Overly generous, he is always in need of money. Rowley has arranged a trap with Moses, a Jewish money-lender whom Charles has approached. Sir Oliver is to go along as Mr. Premium, a (Christian) colleague of Moses. The imposture is possible because the brothers have not seen their uncle for many years and will not recognize him.

At first Sir Oliver Surface is shocked by Charles's essential shiftlessness. Even the servant tries to borrow money ! Although Charles is almost destitute, there is a party in progress. Sir Oliver is further offended by Charles's callous willingness to sell the family portraits. However, Charles refuses to sell Sir Oliver's portrait, for his uncle has been very generous to him and he wants to keep this portrait out of gratitude. Sir Oliver's first reactions are completely reversed by this gesture.

To test the sincerity of Joseph Surface's pious sentiments, Sir

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Oliver plans to pretend to be Stanley, an old distant relative of the family who has fallen on evil days.

Denouement

Joseph Surface has a very bad day. First, Lady Teazle comes to visit him at his quarters. In the middle of his very interesting arguments as to why Lady Teazle should be unfaithful to her husband, Sir Peter arrives and Lady Teazle hides behind a screen. In conversation, Sir Peter describes plans of such generosity to his wife that she is overcome with remorse. When Charles arrives, Sir Peter hides to hear what Charles will say about Lady Teazle. By the end of the scene, Sir Peter has discovered his wife ; Joseph is shown up as a hypocrite, any plans he may have to marry Maria are ruined, and he has lost Lady Teazle, who now wants only one thing—complete reconciliation with her generous middle-aged husband.

Immediately after the departure of Joseph's visitors, Sir Oliver, as Stanley, arrives. Joseph is lavish with pious sentiments but does not give him any money. His uncle in India, he unfortunately adds, has really sent him very little money over the years. At this point Sir Oliver is certain that he will make Charles his heir.

Joseph now feels that, with Sir Peter reconciled to Charles, he has little chance to win Maria and her fortune. He conspires with Lady Sneerwell to have Snake, her tool, swear that Charles "is contracted by vow and honour" to Lady Sneerwell. However, Snake, well paid by Oliver, tells the truth and Joseph's plan is subverted. It is clear that the Teazles are reconciled and Charles and Maria will marry.

An Effective Plot

There is rather more plot in *The School for Scandal* than in most of the comedies of manners, though, as usual in plays of this type, much of the play where the action seems to stand still intended to reveal the personalities of the various members of the little coterie that is brought before our eyes. A close examination will show that in fact there are three plots—one, the marital relations of Sir Peter and his lady ; secondly, the loves of Charles and Maria ; and thirdly, the arrival of Sir Oliver and his discovery of the true character of Joseph. All these are clearly dovetailed into one another by the agency of the arch hypocrite Joseph who is equally at home in Sir Peter's house and in the company of Lady Sneerwell ; Joseph is courting Maria ; Joseph is making love to Lady Teazle ; Joseph is plotting with Lady Sneerwell ; Joseph is playing the false friend to Sir Peter ; Joseph's finger is in every pie. And withal he serves Sheridan's moral purpose of holding up to public scorn the man of sensibility so much esteemed by the ladies of Sheridan's time.

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An Estimate of the Play

Its Reception

The School for Scandal, produced in the spring of 1777, was enthusiastically received. Even when its first run was over it continued to be by far the most popular of revivals. In 1779 the Treasurer to Drury Lane noted on his official receipts *The School for Scandal* damped the new pieces.

Most Brilliant and Effective

The play is not profound, nor is it strikingly original but it is perhaps the most brilliant and most theatrically effective of all English comedies. Sheridan liked the legend to be circulated that he dashed off the manuscript with reckless haste and consummate ease. In point of fact, when he was actually at work, he toiled as assiduously as Horace at an Ode. The concise felicity of expression and the neatness of repartee, which make the dialogue of *The School for Scandal* sparkle like diamonds, can no more be achieved spontaneously than a jig-saw puzzle can be assembled without labour.

Sir Peter : Ah, Madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady Teazle : True, Sir Peter : I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

Sir Benjamin Backbite : Or rather suppose them man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

A Brilliant Workmanship from Common Ingredients

Was the author of *The School for Scandal* a genius, or merely a brilliant workman ? The play certainly throws no new and startling light on human nature or philosophy. So far from rubbing our eyes and saying, "I never thought of that before we are more apt to recognize." It is common knowledge that an extravagant sportsman like Charles Surface is more likely to be warm-hearted than a man as seemingly correct and sententious as his brother. When an old bachelor marries a young wife, the world has long ago learned to look for

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trouble. A semitic money-lender like Moses is a by word for rapacity, and the character of Trip is proverbial—like master like man.

Sheridan has made the play from the very commonest of ingredients. Who could not do the same ? To be Shakespeare one must have intuition and inspiration ; but why cannot any perceptive man with literary ability (and there have been many such since 1777) repeat the triumph of *The School for Scandal* ? The explanation is that the commonness of the ingredients of *The School for Scandal* is the very source, of its strength. When all is abnormally said and done, the world always comes back to take interest in the normal actions of human nature, which, as human nature does not change, make their appeal as effectively to one generation as to another.

Resemblance with Moliere

The School for Scandal is prefaced by a "portrait" addressed to Mrs. Crewe, a well-known member of fashionable society, in which Sheridan celebrates her virtues as something which even Scandal cannot touch. This elegant compliment in verse is followed by Garrick's prologue, after which the play begins by taking the audience into the heart of Scandal, Lady Sneerwell's boudoir, in which all the scandal-mongers gradually assemble. These people bear a superficial resemblance to the scandal-mongers in Moliere's *Le Misanthrope* in that, like Sneer in *The Critic*, their "jest is always at the expense of their friend." No personal relationships can prevent them from scoring a hit : their motives only vary ; with Lady Teazle it is "pleasantly", with old Crabtree malice, and, as for Lady Sneerwell, she herself admits that "wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of Slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation." Of them all, perhaps Mrs. Candour is the most objectionable, for her defence of her unfortunate "friends" is more venomous than the open onslaughts of the others ; she is both hypocrite and slanderer.

Borrowings

There is nothing particularly original about *The School for Scandal* ; Sheridan has been accused of borrowing from other writers. Arthur Murphy—but he was a crossgrained person—declared that Sheridan had stolen some of the best thoughts from his own *Know Your Own Mind* ; critics have noted various resemblances—Little Premium is, they say, only Little Transfer in Foote's *The Minor* ; Charles and Joseph Surface are merely Tom Jones and Blifil up to date ; Stockwellin Cumberland's West Indian postpones recognition of his son Belcour until he has made trial of his character ; some point out that Sir Peter is just the traditional stage old man as Charles is traditional young man. There may be truth in these accusations ; what lifts Sheridan's play above the work of contemporaries is the sparkle and wit of the dialogue and the admirable sense of stage effect, as displayed, for instance, in the famous screen scene ; how admirable may be seen by comparing it

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with the similar scene in *She Stoops to Conquer* when old Marlow and Hardcastle hide behind a screen. Sheridan's scene is dramatic because it is all so natural and because it is throughout the unexpected that happens ; it is in keeping with Sir Peter's credulous nature that he should instantly believe the story of the little milliner and consents to go into the cupboard ; it is in keeping with Charles's impetuous temperament that he should pull Sir Peter out of it ; and it is in keeping with an old man's garrulity that he should so promptly let out the secret which he has just promised to keep. Lady Teazle had no reason to expect her husband to appear, yet the audience would know that he had determined "to open his mind on the subject" of Lady Teazle and Charles "to my friend Joseph" ; Joseph did not expect Charles to call on him nor Sir Peter's sudden determination to test his suspicions ; and the lure of a pretty girl is so strong with Charles that his action in throwing down the screen is as impulsive as it is unexpected.

Stage History

The play was a great success : Horace Walpole—not an easy person to please—writes under date May 16th 1778, just a year after its first production, "I have seen Sheridan's new comedy and liked it much better than any I have seen since *The Provoked Husband*" (a play by Colley Cibber first produced in 1728 in which, incidentally, Lord and Lady Townly are just such another pair as Sir Peter and Lady Teazle). There is good deal of wit, he goes on, "and good situations, but it is too long, has two or three bad scenes that might easily be omitted, and seemed to me to want nature and truth of character : but I have not read it and sat too high to hear well". Two years later he writes, "Apropos to the theatre I have read *The School for Scandal* : it's rapid and lively but is far from containing the wit I expected from seeing it acted." But a casual reference in a letter of 1778 tends to show that even within the year its characters were finding their way into every-day speech. Walpole writes to Lady complaining of his gout and rheumatism and adds, "I have been constantly as broad awake as any Mrs. Candour that is always gaping for Scandal, except when I have taken opiates, and then my dreams have been as extravagant as all Mrs. Candour adds to what she hears." The student may care to consider how far he agrees with this judgement of Walpole's or whether he prefers the uncompromising statement of Byron that *The School for Scandal* is our best comedy.

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17

The School for Scandal

A PORTRAIT

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PROLOGUE
(With Complete Paraphrase)

TEXT
(With Complete Paraphrase)

EPILOGUE
(With Complete Paraphrase)

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A PORTRAIT

Addressed to Mrs. Crewe, with the Comedy of The School for Scandal

BY R. B. SHERIDAN, ESQ.

Tell me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,
Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own
That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise!
Attend!—a model shall attract your view—
Daughters of calumny, I summon you!
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.
Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,
Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
A fix'd antipathy to young and fair;
By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,—
In maiden madness, virulently bold;—
Attend, ye skill'd to coin the precious tale,
Creating proof, where innuendos fail!
Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
Omit no circumstance, except the fact!
Attend, all ye who boast,—or old or young,—
The living libel of a slanderous tongue!
So shall my theme as far contrasted be,
As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny.
Come, gentle *Amoret* (for 'neath that name
In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame),
Come—for but thee who seek the Muse? and while
Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
With timid grace and hesitating eye,
The perfect model, which I boast, supply:—
Vain Muse! could'st thou the humblest sketch create
Of her, or slightest charm could'st imitate—
Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace

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The faintest wonder of her form and face—
Poets would study the immortal line,
And *Reynolds* own his art subdued by thine ;
That art, which well might added lustre give
To Nature's best and heaven's superlative :
On *Granby's* cheek might bid new glories rise,
Or point a purer beam from *Devon's* eyes !
Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays !
But praising *Amoret* we cannot err,
No tongue o'ervalues Heaven, or flatters her !
Yet she by fate's perverseness—she alone
Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her own !
Adorning Fashion, unadorn'd by dress,
Simple by taste, and not from carelessness ;
Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild :
No state has *Amoret* ; no studied mien ;
She frowns no goddess, and she moves no queen,
The softer charm that in her manner lies
Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise ;
It justly suits the expression of her face,—
'Tis less than dignity, and more than grace !
On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
That, form'd by Heaven to be admired so much,
The hand divine, with a less partial care,
Might well have fix'd a fainter crimson there,
And bade the gentle inmate of her breast—
Enshrined Modesty—supply the rest.
But who the peril of her lips shall paint ?
Strip them of smiles—still, still all words are faint !
But moving Love himself appears to teach
Their action, though denied to rule her speech ;
And thou who seest her speak, and dost not hear,
Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear ;
Viewing those lips, thou still may'st make pretence
To judge of what she says, and swear 'tis sense :
Clothed with such grace, with such expression fraugh
They move in meaning, and they pause in thought !
But dost thou farther watch, with charm'd surprise,
The mild irresolution of her eyes,
Curious to mark how frequent they repose,
In brief eclipse and momentary close—

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Ah ! seest thou not an ambush'd Cupid there,
Too tim'rous of his charge, with jealous care
Veils and unveils those beams of heav'nly light,
Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight ?
Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.
What though her peaceful breast should ne'er allow
Subduing frowns to arm her altered brow,
By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,
More fatal still the mercy of her smiles !
Thus lovely, thus adorn'd, possessing all
Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
The height of vanity might well be thought
Prerogative in her, and Nature's fault.
Yet gentle *Amoret*, in mind supreme
As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme ;
And, half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
She barbs with wit those darts too keen before :—
Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though *Greville*, or the Muse, should design to teach,
Fond to improve, nor tim'rous to discern
How far it is a woman's grace to learn ;
In *Millar's* dialect she would not prove
Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love,
Graced by those signs which truth delights to own,
The timid blush, and mild submitted tone :
Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
Displays the tender hue of female doubt ;
Deck'd with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
How graceful science, when that robe she wears !
Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined :
A taste for mirth, by contemplation schooled,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,
A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide ;
An awe of talent, which she owns with pride !
Peace, idle Muse !—no more thy strain prolong,
But yield a theme, thy warmest praises wrong ;
Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
Thy feeble verse, behold th' acknowledged praise
Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And cast a fatal gloom o'er Scandal's reign !
And lo ! each pallid hag, with blister'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung—
Owns all the colours just—the outline true ;
Thee my inspirer, and my model—*Crewe* !

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE, MAY 8, 1777

Sir Peter Teazle	:	*Mr. King*
Sir Oliver Surface	:	*Mr. Yates*
Joseph Surface	:	*Mr. Palmer*
Charles	;	*Mr. Smith*
Crabtree	:	*Mr. Parsons*
Sir Benjamin Backbite	:	*Mr. Dodd*
Rowley	:	*Mr. Aickin*
Moses	:	*Mr. Baddeley*
Trip	:	*Mr. Lamash*
Snake	:	*Mr. Packer*
Careless	:	*Mr. Farren*
Sir Harry Bumper	:	*Mr. Gawary*
Lady Teazle	:	*Mrs. Abington*
Maria	:	*Miss r'. Hopkins*
Lady Sneerwell	:	*Miss Sherry*
Mrs. Candour	:	*Miss Pope*

Gentlemen, Maid. and Servants

Scene : London

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PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK

(Text)

A *School for Scandal* ! tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you ? fashionable
No need of lessons now, the knowing think ;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by the dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones—let them read the papers ;
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit ;
Crave what you will—there's *quantum sufficit.*
"Lord ! " cries my Lady *Wormwood* (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just ris'n at noon, all night at cards, when threshing
Strong tea and scandal—"Bless me, how refreshing !
Give me the papers, *Lisp*—how bold and free ! (*sips*)
Last night Lord L. (sips) *was caught with Lady D.*
For aching heads what charming *sal volatile* ! (*sips*)
If Mrs. B. will still continue flirting,
We hope she'll draw, or we'll undraw the curtain.
Fine satire, poz—in public all abuse it,
But, by ourselves, (*sips*) our praise we can't refuse it.
Now, *Lisp*, read you—there, at that dash and star" :
"Yes, ma'am—*A certain lord had best beware,*
Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square ;
For should he Lady W. find willing,
Wormwood is bitter"—"Oh ! that's me, the villain !
Throw it behind the fire, and never more
Let that vile paper come within my door."
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart ;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.
Is our young bard so young, to think that he
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny ?

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PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK

(Complete Paraphrase)

A *School for Scandal* ! tell me I request you,
Needs there a school this fashionable art to teach you ?
No need of lessons now, the knowing think ;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by the dearth of scandal, should the depression
Distress our fair ones—let them read the papers :
Their powerful mixtures such disorders cure.
Crave what you will—there's as much as suffice
"Lord." cries my Lady Wormwood (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just ris'n at noon, all night at cards, when threshing
Strong tea and scandal—Bless me, how refreshing.
Give me the papers, Lisp—how bold and free (sips)
Last night Lord L. (sips) was caught with Lady D.
For aching heads what charming sal volatile. (sips)
If Mrs. B. will still continue flirting,
We hope she'll Draw, or, we'll Undraw the curtain,
Fine satire positively—in public all abuse it,
But, by ourselves, (sips) our praise we can't refuse it.
Now Lisp, read you—there at that dash and star" :
Yes, ma'am—a Certain Lord had best beware,
Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square :
For should he Lady W. find willing,
Wormwood is bitter—Oh ! that's me, the villain.
Throw it behind the fire, and never more
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Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the attack ;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must suffer.
Is our young poet so young, to think that he
Can stop the full spring tide of calumny ?

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Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil's sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging:
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestow'd,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks this hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for you.

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Knows he the world so little, and its trade ?
Alas ! the devil's sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no stopping
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is moving
Proud of your smiles once generously given,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road ;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks this Snake Scandal, in his den,
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a chivalrous true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for you.

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The School for Scandal

(Text)

ACT I

Scene I—Lady Sneerwell's House

Discovered Lady Sneerwell at the dressing-table ;
Snake drinking chocolate

Lady Sneer. The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted ?

Snake. They were, madam ; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

Lady Sneer. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall ?

Snake. That's in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackitt's ears within four and twenty hours ; and then, you know, the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneer. Why, truly, Mrs. Clackitt has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of industry.

Snake. True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons disinherited ; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements ; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tete-a-tete* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.

Lady Sneer. She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

Snake. 'Tis very true.—She generally designs well, has a free tongue and a bold invention ; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of hint, and mellowness of Sneer, which distinguishes your ladyship's scandal.

Lady Sneer. You are partial, Snake.

Snake. Not in the least —everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a look than many can do with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

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The School for Scandal

(Complete Paraphrase)

ACT I

Scene I—Lady Sneerwell's House

Discovered Lady Sneerwell at the dressing-table ;
Snake drinking chocolate

Lady Sneer. You are sure, as you say Mr. Snake, that the paragraphs were all inserted.

Snake. They were madam ; and as I copied them myself in a different hand, there can be no doubt from where they came.

Lady Sneer. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's affair with Captain Boastall ?

Snake. That's in as fine a situation as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackitt's ears within twenty-four hours ; and then, you know, the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneer. To be frank Mrs. Clackitt has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of hardworking capacity.

Snake. True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons disinherited ; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements ; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Well, I have more than once traced her causing a tete-a-tete in the Town and Country Magazine, when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lifetime.

Lady Sneer. She certainly has talents, but her manner is uncultured.

Snake. 'Tis very true.—She generally plans well, has a free tongue and a bold method ; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of colour and mellowness of sneer, which distinguishes your ladyships's power of scandalising.

Lady Sneer. You are partial to me, Snake.

Snake. Not in the least—everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a look than many can do with the most strenuous efforts, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

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Lady Sneer. Yes, my dear Snake ; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

Snake. Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you lately employed me, wherein, I confess, I am at a loss to guess your motives.

Lady Sneer. I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbour, Sir Peter Teazle, and his family ?

Snake. I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death ; the eldest possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of —the youngest, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character : the former an avowed admirer of your ladyship's, and apparently your favourite : the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me, why you, the widow of a City knight, with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface ; and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria.

Lady Sneer. Then at once to unravel this mystery, I must inform you, that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr. Surface and me.

Snake. No !

Lady Sneer. His real attachment is to Maria, or her fortune ; but finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions, and profit by my assistance.

Snake. Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success.

Lady Sneer. How dull you are ! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you ? Must I confess, that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation, that he it is for whom I'm thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything ?

Snake. Now, indeed, your conduct appears consistent ; but how came you and Mr. Surface so confidential ?

Lady Sneer. For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious— in short, a sentimental knave ; while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.

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Lady Sneer. Yes, my dear Snake ; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I get from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the poisonous tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

Snake. It is quite natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you lately employed me, wherein, I confess I am at a loss to guess your motives.

Lady Sneer. I am sure you mean with respect to my neighbours Sir Peter Teazle, and his family ?

Snake. Yes, I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death ; the elder possessing the most loveable character, and universally well spoken of—the youngest the most corrupted and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom without friends of character : the former a declared admirer of your ladyship, and apparently your favourite ; the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and admittedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly not known to me, why you, the widow of a City Knight, with a good property should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface ; and more so why you should be so uncommonly wish to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria.

Lady Sneer. Then at once to make this mystery clear to you I must inform you, that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr. Surface and me.

Snake. No !

Lady Sneer. His real attachment is to Maria, or her fortune ; but finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to cover his pretensions, and profit by my help.

Snake. Yet still I am more confused why you should be so happy in his success.

Lady Sneer. How dull you are ! Cannot you guess the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess, that Charles, that dissolute, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation, that he it is for whom I'm thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything in life ?

Snake. Now, indeed, your conduct appears consistent ; but how came you and Mr. Surface so intimate ?

Lady Sneer. For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be very clever, selfish, and harmful in short, a sentimental hypocrite while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his friends he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.

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Snake. Yes; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England —and above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

Lady Sneer. True—and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy, he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria; while poor Charles has no friend in the house, though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.

Enter Servant

Serv. Mr. Surface.

Lady Sneer. Show him up. [*Exit Servant.*

Enter Joseph Surface

Joseph S. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day? Mr. Snake, your most obedient servant.

Lady Sneer. Snake has just been rallying me on our mutual attachment; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us, and, believe me, the confidence is not ill placed.

Joseph S. Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and discernment.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, no compliments now; but tell me when you saw your mistress, Maria—or, what is more material to me, your brother.

Joseph S. I have not seen either since I left you; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

Lady Sneer. Ah! my dear Snake! the merit of this belongs to you: but do your brother's distresses increase?

Joseph S. Every hour. I am told he has had another execution in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.

Lady Sneer. Poor Charles!

Joseph S. True, madam; notwithstanding his vices, one can't help feeling for him. Poor Charles! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of any essential service to him; for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves——

Lady Sneer. O Lud! you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends.

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Snake. Yes ; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England —and above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

Lady Sneer. True—and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy, he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria ; while Poor Charles has no friend in the house, though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our plans and purposes.

Enter Servant

Serv. Mr. Surface.

Lady Sneer. Show him up. [*Exit Servant.*

Enter Joseph Surface

Joseph S. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do today ? Mr. Snake, I am your most obedient servant.

Lady Sneer. Snake has just been asking me on our mutual attachment ; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us, and, believe me, the confidence is not placed at the wrong place.

Joseph S. Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and understanding.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, no compliments now ; but tell me when you saw your mistress, Maria—or, what is more important to me, your brother.

Joseph S. I have not seen either since I left you ; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria already.

Lady Sneer. Ah ! my dear Snake, the credit is yours : but does your brother suffer on account of this ?

Joseph S. Every hour. I am told he has had another scene in the house yesterday. In short, his ways and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.

Lady Sneer. Poor Charles !

Joseph S. True, Madam ; not withstanding his vices, one can't help feeling for him. Poor Charles ! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of any essential service to him ; for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though on account of his own misconduct, deserves—

Lady Sneer. O Lud ! you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends of your own kinds.

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Joseph S. Egad, that's true !—I'll keep that sentiment till I see Sir Peter ;—however, it certainly is a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

Snake. I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming : I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you.—Mr. Surface, your most obedient. [*Exit Snake.*

Joseph S. Sir, your very devoted.—Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any farther confidence in that fellow.

Lady Sneer. Why so ?

Joseph S. I have lately detected him in frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

Lady Sneer. And do you think he would betray us ?

Joseph S. Nothing more likely :—take my word for't, Lady Sneerwell, that fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy.——Ah ! Maria !

Enter Maria

Lady Sneer. Maria, my dear, how do you do ?——What's the matter ?

Maria. Oh ! there is that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, has just called at my guardian's, with his odious uncle, Crabtree ; so I slipt out, and ran hither to avoid them.

Lady Sneer. Is that all ?

Joseph S. If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

Lady Sneer. Nay, now you are severe ; for I dare swear the truth of the matter is, Maria heard *you* were here.—But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done, that you would avoid him so ?

Maria. Oh, he has done nothing—but 'tis for what he has said : his conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance.

Joseph S. Ay, and the worst of it is, there is no advantage in not knowing him—for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend ; and his uncle's as bad.

Lady Sneer. Nay, but we should make allowance,—Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

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Joseph S. Egad, that's true !—I'll keep that sentiment till I see Sir Peter ;—however, it certainly is a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reformed can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

Snake. I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming ; I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you—Mr. Surface, your most obedient servant. [*Exit Snake.*

Joseph S. Sir, you are very devoted.—Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any farther confidence in that fellow.

Lady Sneer. Why so ?

Joseph S. I have lately discovered that from my frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

Lady Sneer. And do you think he would betray us ?

Joseph S. Nothing more likely :—take my word for't, Lady Sneerwell, that fellow hasn't goodness enough to be faithful even to his own villainy.—Ah ! Maria !

Enter Maria

Lady Sneer. Maria, my dear, how do you do ?—What's the matter ?

Maria. Oh, there is that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, who has just called at my guardian's, with his hateful uncle, Crabtree : so I have slipped out and come here to get rid of them.

Lady Sneer. Is that the reason why you have come ?

Joseph S. If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

Lady Sneer. Well, now you are very rude ; for I dare swear the truth of the matter is, Maria, heard you were here.—But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done, that you would like to avoid him like this ?

Maria. Oh, he has done nothing—but 'tis for what he has said ; his conversation is a constant source of nuisance to all his friends.

Joseph S. Yes, and the worst of it is, there is no advantage in not knowing him——for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as he does his best friend ; and his uncle is as bad as he is.

Lady Sneer. Well, we should make allowance for the fact that Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

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Maria. For my part, I confess, madam, wit loses its respect with me, when I see it in company with malice.—What do you think, Mr. Surface ?

Joseph S. Certainly, madam ; to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

Lady Sneer. Pshaw !—there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill-nature : the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick.—What's your opinion, Mr. Surface ?

Joseph S. To be sure, madam ; that conversation, where the spirit of raillery is suppressed, will ever appear tedious and insipid.

Maria. Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable ; but in a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalship, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other ; but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one.

Enter Servant

Serv. Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage.

Lady Sneer. Beg her to walk in.—[*Exit Servant.*]—Now, Maria, here is a character to your taste ; for though Mrs. Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best-natured and best sort of woman.

Maria. Yes,—with a very gross affectation of good nature and benevolence, she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree.

Joseph S. I'faith 'tis true, Lady Sneerwell : whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence.

Lady Sneer. Hush !—here she is !—

Enter Mrs. Candour

Mrs. Can. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this century ?——Mr. Surface, what news do you hear ?—though indeed it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

Joseph S. Just so, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Oh, Maria ! child,—what, is the whole affair off between you and Charles ?——His extravagance, I presume—the town talks of nothing else.

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Maria. For my part, I confess, madam, wit loses its respect with me, when I see it in company with wickedness.——What do you think, Mr. Surface ?

Joseph S. Certainly, madam ; to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become an abetter of a crime.

Lady Sneer. Pshaw !——there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill natured : the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick.——What's your opinion, Mr. Surface ?

Joseph S. To be sure, madam ; that conversation, where the spirit of ridicule is suppressed, will ever appear tedious and tasteless.

Maria. Well I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable ; but in a man, I am sure, it is always detestible. We have pride, envy, rivalship, and a thousand motives to talk against each other ; but the male of slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can attack and slander one.

Enter Servant

Serv. Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage.

Lady Sneer. Beg her to walk in.—(*Exit Servant.*)—Now, Maria, here is a character to your taste ; for though Mrs. Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best natured and best sort of woman.

Maria. Yes,—with a very crude pretence of good nature and benevolence, she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree.

Joseph S. I'faith 'tis true, Lady Sneerwell : whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes to defend them.

Lady Sneer. Hush !—here she is !—

Enter Mrs. Candour

Mrs. Can. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been ? I have not seen you for years Mr. Surface ; what news do you hear ? ——though indeed it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal these days !

Joseph S. You are right, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Oh, Maria ! child, what, is the whole affair off between you and Charles ?—His extravagance, I presume—the town talks of nothing else.

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Maria. I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

Mrs. Can. True, true, child : but there's no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it, as I indeed was to learn, from the same quarter, that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately as well as could be wished.

Maria. 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

Mrs. Can. Very true, child :—but what's to be done ? People will talk—there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt. But, Lord ! there's no minding what one hears ; though, to be sure, I had this from very good authority.

Maria. Such reports are highly scandalous.

Mrs. Can. So they are, child—shameful, shameful ! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes.—Lord, now who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion ? Yet such is the ill-nature of people, that they say her uncle stopt her last week, just as she was stepping into the York diligence with her dancing-master.

Maria. I'll answer for't there are no grounds for that report.

Mrs. Can. Ah, no foundation in the world, I dare swear ; no more, probably, than for the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino ;—though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.

Joseph S. The licence of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

Maria. 'Tis so,—but, in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.

Mrs. Can. To be sure they are ; tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers—'tis an old observation, and a very true one : but what's to be done, as I said before ? how will you prevent people from talking ? To-day, Mrs. Clackitt assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife, like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted that a certain widow, in the next street, had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time, Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed, that Lord Buffalo had discovered his lady at a house of no extraordinary fame ; and that Sir H. Boquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar provocation.—But, Lord, do you think I would report these things ?—No, no ! tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as the tale-makers.

Joseph S. Ah ! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good-nature !

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Maria. I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

Mrs. Can. True, true, child : but you cannot stop people from talking. I admit that I was hurt to hear it, as I indeed was to learn, from the same quarter, that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately as it was expected they should.

Maria. 'Tis strangely wicked of people to busy themselves with scandals.

Mrs. Can. Very true, child :—but what's to be done ? People will talk—there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt. But, Lord, there's no end to what one hears ; though, to be sure, I had got this information from a reliable source.

Maria. Such reports are highly scandalous.

Mrs. Can. So they are, child—they are shameful, shameful. But the world is so censorious, no one can escape it——Lord, now, who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an unwise affair. Yet such is the bad nature of people, that they say her uncle stopped her last week, just as she was stepping into the York mail with her dancing master.

Maria. Let me tell you that there are no grounds for that kind of scandal.

Mrs. Can. Yes, yes, I believe that there is no ground for such scandal, no more, probably, than for the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino ;—though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly accounted for.

Joseph S. The way people make scandalous stories is monstrous indeed.

Maria. 'Tis so, but, in my opinion, those who report such things are equally responsible.

Mrs. Can. To be sure they are ; tale bearers are as bad as the tale-makers—'tis an old observation, and a very true one : but what's to be done, as I said before ? How will you stop people from talking ? To-day, Mrs. Clackitt assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife, like the rest of their friends. She likewise hinted that a certain widow, in the next street, had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time, Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed, that Lord Buffalo had discovered his lady at a house of no extraordinary fame ; and that Sir H. Boquet and Tom Saunter were to take out swords on a similar Provocation.—But, Lord, do you think I would report these things ?—No, no ! tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as the tale-makers.

Joseph S. Ah ! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had good nature and patience like you.

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Mrs. Can. I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintance, I own I always love to think the best.——By the by, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined?

Joseph S. I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Ah! I heard so—but you must tell him to keep up his spirits; everybody almost is in the same way—Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit—all up, I hear, within this week; so if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintance ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

Joseph S. Doubtless, ma'am—a very great one.

Enter Servant

Serv. Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[*Exit Servant.*

Lady Sneer. So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you; positively you shan't escape.

Enter Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite

Crabt. Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand—Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite? Egad! ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too; isn't he, Lady Sneerwell?

Sir Benj. B. O fie, uncle!

Crabt. Nay, egad, it's true; I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom.—Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire?—Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's conversazione. Come now;—your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and——

Sir Benj. B. Uncle, now—pr'ythee—

Crabt. I'faith, ma'am, 'twould surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these fine sort of things.

Lady Sneer. I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

Sir Benj. B. To say truth, ma'am, 'tis very vulgar to print; and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. However, I have some love elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give the public.

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Mrs. Can. I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs and when ugly circumstances come out against our friends. I admit, I always love to think the best.—By the by, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined ?

Joseph S. I am afraid his circumstances are very bad.

Mrs. Can. Ah. I heard so—but you must tell him to keep up his spirits ; everybody almost is in the same way—Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit—all up, I hear, within this week ; so if Charles is ruined, he'll find half his acquaintance, ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation in distress.

Joseph S. Doubtless, madam. It is a great consolation.

Enter Servant

Serv. Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite. [*Exit servant.*

Lady Sneer. So, Maria, you see your lover is following you ; you cannot avoid him.

Enter Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite

Crabt. Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand—Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite ? Egad ! ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too ; isn't he, Lady Sneerwell ?

Sir Benj. B. O Shame, uncle.

Crabt. Well, egad, it's true ; I support him at a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom.—Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire ?—Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's fashionable gathering. Come now ;—your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and—

Sir Benj. B. Uncle, now—I pray you to be silent—

Crabt. I 'faith, ma'am, 'twould surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these fine sort of things.

Lady Sneer. I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

Sir Benj. B. To say the truth, ma'am, 'tis not worthy to be printed ; and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. However, I have some love elegies, which when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to publish for the public.

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Crabt. 'Fore heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalise you !—you will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

Sir Benj. B. Yes, madam, I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall meander through a meadow of margin.—'Fore Gad, they will be the most elegant things of their kind !

Crabt. But, ladies, that's true—have you heard the news ?

Mrs. Can. What, sir, do you mean the report of—

Crabt. No, ma'am, that's not it—Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

Mrs. Can. Impossible !

Crabt. Ask Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. 'Tis very true, ma'am ; everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoke.

Crabt. Yes—and they do say there were pressing reasons for it.

Lady Sneer. Why, I have heard something of this before.

Mrs. Can. It can't be—and I wonder any one should believe such a story, of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

Sir Benj. B. O Lud ! ma'am, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once. She has always been so cautious and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

Mrs. Can. Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp, as a fever is generally to those of the strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of puny sickly reputation, that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robuster characters of a hundred prudes.

Sir Benj. B. True, madam,—there are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution ; who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply their want of stamina by care and circumspection.

Mrs. Can. Well, but this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.

Crabt. That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am.—Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her love and her character last summer at Tunbridge ?—Sir Benjamin, you remember it ?

Sir Benj. B. Oh, to be sure !—the most whimsical circumstance.

Lady Sneer. How was it, pray ?

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Crabt. 'Fore heaven, madam, they'll make you immortal—you will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Weller's Sacharissa.

Sir Benj. B. Yes, madam, I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall go through a meadow of margin. By God, they will be the most elegant things of their kind in the world.

Crabt. But, ladies, that's true—have you heard the news ?

Mrs. Can. What, sir, do you mean the report of—

Crabt. No, ma'am, that's not it—Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

Mrs. Can. Impossible.

Crabt. Ask sir Benjamin, if you don't believe me.

Sir Benj. B 'Tis very true, madam ; everything is fixed, and the wedding clothes are already ordered for.

Crabt. Yes—and they do say they were giving defensive explanations for the marriage.

Lady Sneer. Why, I have heard something of this before.

Mrs. Can. It can't be—and I wonder any one should believe such a story, of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

Sir Benj. B. O Lud, madam, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once. She has always been so careful and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for her reservations.

Mrs. Can. Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp, as a fever is generally to those of the strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of very sickly reputation, that is always ailing, yet will outlive the strongest characters of a hundred wise men.

Sir Benj. B. True, madam, there are delicate people in reputation as well as constitution ; who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply their want of stamina by care and judicious reasons.

Mrs. Can. Well, but this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very negligible circumstances often give rise to the most harmful gossips.

Crabt. That they do, I'll be sworn, madam.—Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her love and her character last summer at Tunbridge ?—Sir Benjamin, you remember it ?

Sir Benj. B. Oh, to be sure ; it was a very strange thing.

Lady Sneer. How did it happen ?

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Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

Crabt. Why, one evening, at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a lady in company, "I have had instances of it—for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins."—"What!" cries the Lady Dowager Dundizzy (who you know is as deaf as a post), "has Miss Piper had twins?"—This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughing. However, 'twas the next day everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Miss Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl; and in less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farm-house where the babies were put to nurse.

Lady Sneer. Strange, indeed!

Crabt. Matter of fact, I assure you.—O Lud! Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home?

Joseph S. Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

Crabt. He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe? Sad comfort whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on!

Joseph S. Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform.

Sir Benj. B. To be sure he may: for my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say; and though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of by the jews.

Crabt. That's true, egad, nephew. If the Old Jewry was a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman:—no man more popular there, 'fore Gad! I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine; and that whenever he is sick, they have prayers for the recovery of his health in all the synagogues.

Sir Benj. B. Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities; have a score of tradesmen waiting in the antechamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.

Joseph S. This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen, but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother.

Maria. Their malice is intolerable.—Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning: I'm not very well. [*Exit Maria.*

Mrs. Can. O dear! she changes colour very much.

Lady Sneer. Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her: she may want assistance.

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Crabt. Why, one evening, at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a lady in company, 'I have had instances of it—for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins.—"What," cries the Lady Dowager Dundizzy (who you know is as deaf as a post), "has Miss Piper had twins ?" —This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughing. However, 'twas next day everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Miss Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl ; and in less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farm house where the babies were born and brought up.

Lady Sneer. Strange, indeed.

Crabt. Matter of fact, I assure you.—O Lud, Mr. Surface, pray, is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home ?

Joseph S. I do not know about that, sir.

Crabt. He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe ? Sad comfort whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has been behaving in public.

Joseph S. Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure ; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may correct himself.

Sir Benj. B. To be sure he may : for my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say ; and though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of by the Jews.

Crabt. That's true, egad, nephew. If the Old Jewry was a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman :—no more man popular there, by God. I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine ; and that whenever he is sick, they have prayers for the recovery of his health in all Jewish temples.

Sir Benj. B. Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own guards ; have a score of tradesmen waiting in the antechamber, and a bailif's man behind every guest's chair.

Joseph S. This may be entertainment to you, gentleman, but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother who is present here.

Maria. Their malice is intolerable—Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning : I'm not very well. [*Exit Maria.*

Mrs. Can. O dear, she changes colour very much.

Lady Sneer. Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her : she may want assistance.

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Mrs. Can. That I will, with all my soul, ma'am.—Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be! [*Exit Mrs. Candour.*

Lady Sneer. 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstanding their difference.

mutual inclination

Sir Benj. B. The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.

Crabt But, Benjamin, you must not give up the pursuit for that :—follow her, and put her into good humour. Repeat her some of your own verses. Come, I'll assist you.

Sir Benj. B. Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you; but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.

Crabt. O Lud, ay! undone as ever man was.—Can't raise a guinea!—

Sir Benj. B. Everything sold, I'm told, that was movable.—

Crabt. I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which I believe are framed in the wainscots—

Sir Benj. B. And I'm very sorry, also, to hear some bad stories against him. [*Going.*

Crabt. Oh! he has done many mean things, that's certain.

Sir Benj. B. But, however, as he's your brother—— [*Going.*

Crabt. We'll tell you all another opportunity.

[*Exeunt Crabtree and Sir Benjamin.*

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! 'tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

Joseph S. And I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your ladyship than Maria.

Lady Sneer. I doubt her affections are farther engaged than we imagine. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing further; in the meantime, I'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiment. [*Exeunt.*

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Mrs. Can. That I will, with all my soul, madam—Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be.

[*Exit Mrs. Candour.*

Lady Sneer. 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles criticised, despite the fact that they are not in good terms.

Sir Benj. B. The young lady's mutual inclination is obvious.

Crabt. But, Benjamin, you must not give up the pursuit for that :—follow her, and put her into good humour. Repeat her some of your own verses. Come, I'll help you in your endeavour.

Sir Benj. B. Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you ; but depend on it your brother is utterly ruined.

Crabt. O Lud, yes, undone as ever man was.—Can't raise a guinea.—

Sir Benj. B. Everything sold, I'm told, that was movable—

Crabt. I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which I believe are framed in the wainscots—

Sir Benj. B. And I'm very sorry, also, to hear some bad stories against him. [*Going.*

Crabt. Oh, he has done many mean things, there is no doubt about that.

Sir Benj. B. But, however, as he's your brother— [*Going.*

Crabt. We'll tell you all some other time.

[*Exeunt Crabtree and Sir Benjamin*]

Lady Sneer. Ha, ha, 'tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite exhausted.

Joseph S. And I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your ladyship than to Maria.

Lady Sneer. I doubt her affections are much more than we can imagine. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing further ; in the meantime, I'll go and plot mischief and you shall study its effect on others. [*Exeunt.*

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Scene II—Sir Peter's House

Enter Sir Peter

Sir Peter T. When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect ? 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since ! We tift a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution—a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet now she plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square ! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours ; yet, the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. Oh ! Sir Peter, your servant : how is it with you, sir ?

Sir Peter T. Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

Rowley. What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday ?

Sir Peter T. A good question to a married man !

Rowley. Nay, I'm sure your lady, Sir Peter, can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

Sir Peter T. Why, has anybody told you she was dead ?

Rowley. Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her, not-withstanding your tempers don't exactly agree.

Sir Peter T. But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley : I am, myself, the sweetest-tempered man alive, and hate a teasing temper ; and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

Rowley. Indeed !

Sir Peter T. Ay ; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong ! But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition,—Then, to complete my vexation, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband ; meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

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Wicked and
Loose

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Scene II—Sir Peter's House

Enter Sir Peter

Sir Perer T. When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect ? 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since. We quarrel a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution—a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet now she is an important figure in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass plot out of Grosvenor Square. I am sneered at by all my friends and mentioned in the columns of newspapers. She squanders my fortune, and contradicts all my likes and dislikes. Yet, the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to admit the fact.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. Oh, Sir Peter, your servant : how is it with you, sir ?

Sir Peter T. Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and irritations.

Rowley. What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday ?

Sir Peter T. A good question to a married man.

Rowley. Well, I'm sure, your lady, Sir Peter, can't be the cause of your unhappiness.

Sir Peter T. Why, has anybody told you she was dead ?

Rowley. Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her in spite of the fact that your tempers don't exactly agree.

Sir Peter T. But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am myself, the sweetest tempered man alive, and hate a teasing temper ; and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

Rowley. Indeed.

Sir Peter T. Yes : and what is very extraordinary, in all our quarrels she is always in the wrong. But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the wrong she commits. Then, to complete my irritation, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long decided to be her husband ; I suppose, she wants to surrender herself to his wicked and loose brother.

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Rowley. You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles, my life on't! he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was, at his years, nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss.

Sir Peter T. You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Sir Oliver's liberality gave them an early independence: of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the *sentiments* he professes; but for the other, take my word for't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah! my old friend, Sir Oliver, will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

Rowley. I am sorry to find you so violent against the young man, because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news that will surprise you.

Sir Peter T. What! let me hear.

Rowley. Sir Oliver *is* arrived, and at this moment is in town.

Sir Peter T. How! you astonish me! I thought you did not expect him this month.

Rowley. I did not; but his passage has been remarkably quick.

Sir Peter T. Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend. 'Tis fifteen years since we met.—We have had many a day together:—but does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival?

Rowley. Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their dispositions.

Sir Peter T. Ah! there needs no art to discover their merits—he shall have his way: but, pray, does he know I am married?

Rowley. Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

Sir Peter T. What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption? Ah! Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, and he has been steady to his text.—Well, he must be soon at my house, though! —I'll instantly give orders for his reception.—But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

Rowley. By no means.

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Rowley. You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles, my life on't ; he will yet correct himself. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was, at his years, nearly as wild a spark ; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart than mine to lament how I missed him.

Sir Peter T. You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Sir Oliver's generosity gave them an early independence. Of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the sentiment he declares ; but for the other, take my word for it if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has wasted it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah, my old friend Sir Oliver will be deeply hurt when he finds how part of his generosity has been mispleased.

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Sir Peter T. What ? let me hear about it.

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Rowley. I did not ; but his arrival has been remarkably quick.

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Rowley. Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their character.

Sir Peter T. Ah, there is no necessity of any skill to be applied to know their characters—however let him have his way : but, prey, does he know I am married.

Rowley. Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

Sir Peter T. What, as we drink health to a friend suffering from consumption ? Ah ! Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, and he has been true to his vow. Well, he must be soon at my house, anyway—I'll instantly give orders for his reception. But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever quarrel with each other.

Rowley. By no means.

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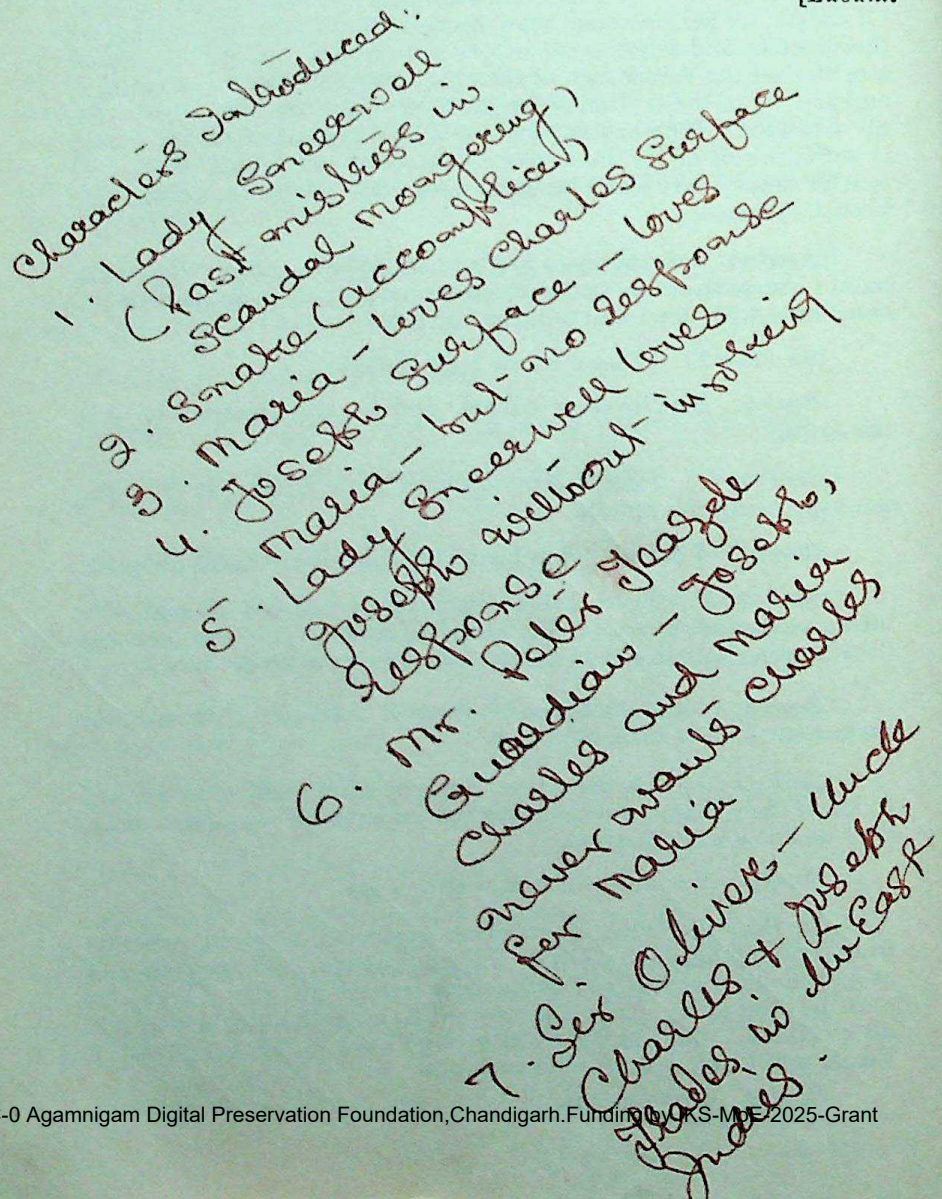
Sir Peter T. For I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes; so I'd have him think, Lord forgive me! that we are a very happy couple.

Rowley. I understand you:—but then you must be very careful not to differ while he is in the house with you.

Sir Peter T. Egad, and so we must—and that's impossible. Ah! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves—no—the crime carries its punishment along with it.

[*Exeunt.*



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Sir Peter T. Egad, and so we must—and that's impossible. Ah ! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves the punishment that accompanies such a crime.

[*Exeun'.*

8. Sir Peter a widower marries a young lady with extravagant mood : always fighting

9. Rowley - a Steward of Surface Family :

Oliver Comes from the East-Indies and wants to See Peter Teazle :

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ACT II

Scene I—Sir Peter's House

Enter Sir Peter and Lady Teazle

Sir Peter T. Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it !

Lady T. Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please ; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will, too. What ! though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

Sir Peter T. Very well, ma'am, very well ;—so a husband is to have no influence, no authority ?

Lady T. Authority ! No, to be sure :—if you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me : I am sure you were old enough.

Sir Peter T. Old enough !—ay—there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

Lady T. My extravagance ! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife ! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give a *fete champetre* at Christmas.

Lady T. And am I to blame, Sir Peter, because flowers are dear in cold weather ? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure, I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses grew under one's feet !

Sir Peter T. Oons ! madam—if you had been born to this, I shouldn't wonder at your talking thus ; but you forget what your situation was when I married you.

Lady T. No, no, I don't ; 'twas a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

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ACT II

Scene I—Sir Peter's House

Enter Sir Peter and Lady Teazle

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Lady T. Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please ; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will, too. What ! though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are answerable to nobody after their marriage.

Sir Peter T. Very well, madam very well ;—so a husband is to have no control, no authority ?

Lady T. Authority ! No, to be sure ; if you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me : I am sure you were old enough to adopt me as your child.

Sir Peter T. Old enough ! yes—there it is ! Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

Lady T. My extravagance ! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such useless luxury. 'Slife ! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give an evening party at Christmas.

Lady T. And am I to blame, Sir Peter, because flowers are costly in cold weather ? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure, I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses were found everywhere in abundance.

Sir Peter T. Impossible madam ! if you had been born to this I should'n't wonder at your talking thus ; but you forget what you were when I married you.

Lady T. No, no, I don't ; 'twas a very unpleasant one, or I should never have married you.

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Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat a humbler style :—the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side ; your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

Lady T. O, yes ! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led. My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book,—and comb my aunt Deborah's lapdog.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas so indeed.

Lady T. And then, you know, my evening amusements ! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not materials to make up ; to play Pope Joan with the curate ; to read a sermon to my aunt ; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

Sir Peter T. I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from ; but now you must have your coach—*vis-a-vis*—and three powdered footmen before your chair ; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, on a dock'd coach-horse.

Lady T. No—I swear I never did that : I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

Sir Peter T. This, madam, was your situation ; and what have I done for you ? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank ; in short, I have made you my wife.

Lady T. Well, then,—and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is——

Sir Peter T. My widow, I suppose ?

Lady T. Hem ! hem !

Sir Peter T. I thank you, madam—but don't flatter yourself ; for though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my heart, I promise you : however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

Lady T. Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense ?

Sir Peter T. 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these little elegant expenses when you married me ?

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Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, madam, you were then somewhat humbler, the daughter of a plain country squire ; try to remember, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your place, in a pretty figured linen gown with a bunch of keys at your side ; your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with ornamental scene of your own making.

Lady T. O, yes ! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led. My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt book—and comb my aunt Deborah's lapdog.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas like that.

Lady T. And then, you know, my evening amusements. To draw patterns for tables, which I had not materials to make up ; to play Pope Joan with the curate ; to read a sermon to my aunt ; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to lull my father to sleep after a hunting.

Sir Peter T. I am glad you have so good memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from ; but now you must have your coach—vis-a-vis—and three powdered footmen before your chair ; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. You don't remember, I suppose, when you were happy to ride double, behind the butler, on an ordinary coach.

Lady T. No—I swear I never did that : I deny the butler and the coach horse.

Sir Peter T. This, madam, was your condition ; and what have I done for you ? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank ; in short, I have made you my wife.

Lady T. Well, then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is——

Sir Peter T. My widow, I suppose ?

Lady T. Hem ! hem !

Sir Peter T. I thank you, madam—but don't flatter yourself for though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my heart, I promise you : however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint of making you a widow.

Lady T. Then why will you try to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and object to every little elegant expense I go for ?

Sir Peter T. 'Slife, madam, I say, could afford you of these little elegant expenses when you married me ?

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Lady T. Lud, Sir Peter! would you have me be out of the fashion?

Sir Peter T. The fashion, indeed! what had you to do with the fashion before you married me?

Lady T. For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

Sir Peter T. Ay—there again—taste—Zounds! madam, you had no taste when you married me!

Lady T. That's very true indeed, Sir Peter; and after having married you, I should never pretend to taste again, I allow. But now, Sir Peter, if we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's.

Sir Peter T. Ay, there's another precious circumstance—a charming set of acquaintance you have made there.

Lady T. Nay, Sir Peter, they are all people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.

Sir Peter T. Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance; for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves!—Such a crew! Ah! many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation.

Lady T. What! would you restrain the freedom of speech?

Sir Peter T. Oh! they have made you just as bad as any one of the society.

Lady T. Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace. But I vow I bear no malice against the people I abuse. When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humour; and I take it for granted, they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you khow you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

Lady T. Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So, good-bye to you. [*Exit Lady Teazle.*

Sir Peter T. So—I have gained much by my intended expostulation: yet, with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt for my authority! Well, though I can't make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her; and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me.

[*Exit.*

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Lady T. Lud, Sir Peter, would you want me to be out of fashion ?

Sir Peter T. The fashion, indeed ! what had you to do with the fashion before you married me ?

Lady T. For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

Sir Peter T. Yes—there again—taste—Zounds ! madam, you had no taste when you married me.

Lady T. That's very true indeed, Sir Peter ; and after having married you, I should never pretend to taste again, I admit. But now, Sir Peter, if we have finished our daily ritual, I presume I may go to Lady Sneerwell with whom I have an engagement.

Sir Peter T. Yes, there's another precious circumstance—a charming set of acquaintance you have made there.

Lady T. Well Sir Peter, they are all people of rank and fortune, and remarkably respectable in their positions.

Sir Peter T. Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance ; for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves.—Such a group of wicked persons ! Ah ! many a wretch has gone through severe punishment, who has done less mischief than these utterers of made-up tales, coiners of scandal, and persons who cause disreputation to others.

Lady T. What ! would you restrain the freedom of speech ?

Sir Peter T. Oh ! they have made you just as bad as any one of the group.

Lady T. Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace. But I vow I bear no wickedness against the people I abuse. When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humour ; and I take it for granted, they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell house !

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

Lady T. Then indeed you must come immediately or you'll be too late. So, good-bye to you. [*Exit Lady Teazle.*

Sir Peter T. So I have gained much by my intended arguments yet, with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her anger for my authority ! Well, though I can't make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her ; and I think she never appears prettier and more handsome as when she is doing everything in her power to make me unhappy. [*Exit.*

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Scene II—At Lady Sneerwell's

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Joseph Surface, discovered, servants attending with tea.

Lady Sneer. Nay, positively, we will hear it.

Joseph S. Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

Sir Benj. B. O plague on't, uncle ! 'tis mere nonsense.

Crabt. No, no ; 'fore Gad, very clever for an extempore !

Sir Benj. B. But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance. You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricle was taking the dust in Hyde Park, in a sort of duodecimo phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies ; upon which I took out my pocket-book, and in one moment produced the following :

Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies ;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies :
To give'em this title I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

Crabt. There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip, and on horseback too.

Joseph S. A very Phoebus, mounted—indeed, Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. O dear, sir ! trifles—trifles.

Enter Lady Teazle and Maria

Mrs. Can. I must have a copy.

Lady Sneer. Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter ?

Lady T. I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down to piquet with Mr. Surface.

Maria. I take very little pleasure in cards—however, I'll do as you please.

Lady T. I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me before Sir Peter came. [*Aside*

Mrs. Can. Now, I'll die, but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

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Scene II—At Lady Sneerwell's

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Joseph Surface, discovered, servants attending with tea.

Lady Sneer. Well, we must hear it.

Joseph S. Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

Sir Benj. B. O plague on't, uncle, 'tis nothing but nonsense.

Crabt. No, no ; 'fore Gad, very clever for an extempore.

Sir Benj. B. But, Ladies, you should be familiar with the circumstance. You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricle was taking the walk in Hyde Park, in a sort of small cart, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies ; upon which I took out my pocket book, and in one moment produced the following :

Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies ;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies :
To give 'em this title I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

Crabt. There, ladies, done in the sound of a whip, and while he was on horseback.

Joseph S. A very Phoebus, mounted—indeed, Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. O dear, Sir ! these are nothing, these are nothing.

Enter Lady Teazle and Maria

Mrs. Can. I must have a copy.

Lady Sneer. Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter.

Lady T. I believe he'll wait on your ladyship very soon.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my love you look serious. Come, you shall sit down to a card game with Mr. Surface.

Maria. I take very little pleasure in cards—however, I'll do as you please.

Lady T. I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her : I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me before Sir Peter came. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. Now, I'll die, but you are so scandalous, I'll give up your society.

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Lady T. What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

Mrs. Can. They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermillion to be handsome.

Lady Sneer. Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.

Crabt. I am very glad you think so, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. She has a charming fresh colour.

Lady T. Yes, when it is fresh put on.

Mrs. Can. Oh, fie! I'll swear her colour is natural: I have seen it come and go.

Lady T. I dare swear you have, ma'am; it goes off at night, and comes again in the morning.

Sir Benj. B. True, ma'am, it not only comes and goes, but, what's more—egad, her maid can fetch and carry it!

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha! how I hate to hear you talk so! But surely now, her sister *is*, or *was*, very handsome.

Crabt. Who? Mrs. Evergreen? O Lord! she's six and fifty if she's an hour!

Mrs. Can. Now positively you wrong her; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost—and I don't think she looks more.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, if Mrs. Evergreen *does* take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre caulks her wrinkles.

Sir Benj. B. Nay now, Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, 'tis not that she paints so ill—but when she has finished her face, she joins it so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique.

Crabt. Ha! ha! ha! well said, nephew!

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha! well, you make me laugh; but I vow I hate you for it.—What do you think of Miss Simper?

Sir Benj. B. Why, she has very pretty teeth.

Lady T. Yes, and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar, as it were,—thus.

[*Shows her teeth.*

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Lady T. What's the matter, Mrs. Candour ?

Mrs. Can. They'll not admit that our friend Miss Vermillion is handsome.

Lady Sneer. Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.

Crabt. I am very glad you think so madam.

Mrs. Can. She has a charming fresh colour.

Lady T. Yes, when it is applied fresh on her face.

Mrs. Can. Oh, shame, I'll swear her colour is natural : I have seen it come and go.

Lady T. I dare swear you have, madam : it goes off at night and comes again in the morning.

Sir Benj. B. True, madam, it not only comes and goes, but, what's more, egad, her maid can bring and carry it.

Mrs. Can. Ha ! ha ! ha ! now I hate to hear you talk like this. But surely now, her sister is, or was, very handsome.

Crabt. Who ? Mrs. Evergreen ? O Lord ! She's six and fifty years if not less.

Mrs. Can. Now positively you wrong her ; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost—and I don't think she looks more than that.

Sir Benj. B. Ah ! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, if Mrs. Evergreen does take some pains to repair the loss of beauty caused by old age, you must allow she does it with great skill ; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre fills her wrinkles.

Sir Benj. B. Well now, Lady Sneerwell, you are very rude upon the widow. Come, come, 'tis not that she paints so badly—but when she has finished her face, she joins it so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the art lover sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique.

Crabt. Ha ! ha ! ha ! well said, nephew.

Mrs. Can. Ha ! ha ! ha ! well, you make me laugh ; but I vow I hate you for it.—What do you think of Miss Simper ?

Sir Benj. B. Why, she has very pretty teeth.

Lady T. Yes, and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always open as it were,—thus.

[*Shows her teeth.*

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Mrs. Can. How can you be so ill-natured ?

Lady T. Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's box, and all her words appear to slide out edgewise as it were,—thus—*How do you do, madam ? Yes, madam.*

Lady Sneer. Very well, Lady Teazle ; I see you can be a little severe.

Lady T. In defence of a friend it is but justice.—But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry.

Enter Sir Peter Teazle

Sir Peter T. Ladies, your most obedient.—Mercy on me ! here is the whole set ! a character dead at every word, I suppose. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious—and Lady Teazle as bad as any one.

Sir Peter T. It must be very distressing to *you*, Mrs. Candour, I daFe swear.

Mrs. Can. Oh, they will allow good qualities to nobody ; not even good-nature to our friend Mrs. Pursy.

Lady T. What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille's last night ?

Mrs. Can. Nay, her bulk is her misfortune ; and when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you ought not to reflect on her.

Lady Sneer. That's very true, indeed.

Lady T. Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey ; laces herself by pulleys ; and often in the hottest noon in summer, you may see her on a little squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

Mrs. Can. I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

Sir Peter T. Yes, a good defence, truly !

Mrs. Can. Truly, Lady Teazle is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

Crabt. Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious—an awkward gawky, without any one good point under heaven.

Mrs. Can. Positively you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine by marriage, and as for her person, great allowance is to be made ; for, let me tell you, a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six and thirty.

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Mrs. Can. How can you be so ill-natured ?

Lady T. Well, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses of teeth in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the shutters of a poor's box, and all her words appear to slide out sideways as it were,—thus—How do you do, madam ? Yes, madam !

Lady Sneer. Very well, Lady Teazle ; I see you can be a little severe.

Lady T. In defence of a friend it is but justice.—But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasant mood.

Enter Sir Peter Teazle

Sir Peter T. Ladies, your most obedient servant—Mercy on me—here is the whole set ! a character dead at every word, I suppose.

Mrs. Can. I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious—and Lady Teazle as bad as any one.

Sir Peter T. It must be very distressing to you, Mrs. Candour, to bear with this company.

Mrs. Can. Oh, they will allow good qualities to nobody ; not even good nature to our friend Mrs. Pursy.

Lady T. What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille's last night ?

Mrs. Can. Well her fat is her misfortune ; and when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you ought not to criticise her like this.

Lady Sneer. That's very true, indeed.

Lady T. Yes, I know she almost lives on citric acids and small milk ; laces herself by pulleys ; and often in the hottest noon in summer, you may see her on a little pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer's and riding and driving at full speed.

Mrs. Can. I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

Sir Peter T. Yes, a good defence, truly.

Mrs. Can. Truly, Lady Teazle is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

Crabt. Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious—an awkward gawky, without any good in the world for anybody.

Mrs. Can. Positively you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine by marriage, and as for her person, great allowance is to be made ; for let me tell you, a woman works under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six and ~~ithrty~~. Thirty -

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Lady Sneer. Though, surely, she is handsome still—and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, it is not to be wondered at.

Mrs. Can. True, and then as to her manner; upon my word I think it is particularly graceful, considering she never had the least education: for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner, and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! you are both of you too good-natured!

Sir Peter T. Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! mercy on me! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill-spoken of.

Sir Peter T. No, to be sure!

Sir Benj. B. Oh! you are of a moral turn. Mrs. Candour and I can sit for an hour and hear Lady Stucco talk sentiment.

Lady T. Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the dessert after dinner; for she's just like the French fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb.

Mrs. Can. Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical on beauty!

Crabt. Oh, to be sure! she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen; 'tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

Sir Benj B. So she has, indeed—an Irish front—

Crabt. Caledonian locks—

Sir Benj. B. Dutch nose—

Crabt. Austrian lips—

Sir Benj. B. Complexion of a Spaniard—

Crabt. And teeth *a la Chinoise*—

Sir Benj. B. In short, her face resembles a *table d'hote* at Spa—where no two guests are of a nation—

Crabt. Or a congress at the close of a general war—wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha!

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Lady Sneer. Though, surely, she is handsome still—and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, it is not to be wondered at.

Mrs. Can. True, and then as to her manner ; upon my word I think it is particularly graceful, considering she never had the least education : for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner, and her father a sugar baker at Bristol.

Sir Benj. B. Ah ! you are both of you too good natured.

Sir Peter T. Yes, damned good natured. This happens to their own relation ! mercy on me ! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill spoken of.

Sir Peter T. No, to be sure.

Sir Benj. B. Oh, you are of a moral turn. Mrs. Candour and I can sit for an hour and hear Lady Stucco talk of morals.

Lady T. Well, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the fruit after dinner ; for she's just like the imitation fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb.

Mrs. Can. Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend and that's I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what rights she has to be critical on beauty.

Crabt. Oh, to be sure ! she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen ; 'tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

Sir Benj. B. So she has, indeed—an Irish front—

Crabt. Caledonian locks—

Sir Benj. B. Dutch nose—

Crabt. Austrian lips.——

Sir Benj. B. Complexion of a Spaniard—

Crabt. And teeth of a chinese—

Sir Benj. B. In short, her face resembles a hotel dining hall at Spa—where no two guests are of one nation—

Crabt. Or a conference at the close of a general war—wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appears to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to agree together.

Mrs. Can. Ha ! ha ! ha !

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Sir Peter T. Mercy on my life?—a person they dine with twice a week. [*Aside.*

Lady Sneer. Go, go; you are a couple of provoking toads.

Mrs. Can. Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so—for give me leave to say, that Mrs. Ogle——

Sir Peter T. Madam, madam, I beg your pardon—there's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues.—But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you'll not take her part.

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! ha! Well said, Sir Peter! but you are a cruel creature,—too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

Sir Peter T. Ah! madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good-nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady T. True, Sir Peter: I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

Sir Benj. B. Or rather, madam, suppose them to be man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

Lady T. But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal, I believe he would have it put down by Parliament.

Sir Peter T. 'Fore heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an Act for the Preservation of Fame, I believe there are many would thank them for the bill.

Lady Sneer. O Lud! Sir Peter; would you deprive us of our privileges?

Sir Peter T. Ay, madam; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run down reputations but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

Lady Sneer. Go, you monster!

Mrs. Can. But, surely, you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear?

Sir Peter T. Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the endorsers.

Crabt. Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

Sir Peter T. Oh, nine out of ten of the malicious inventions are founded on some ridiculous misrepresentation!

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Sir Peter T. Mercy on my life ! this is the person they dine with twice a week. [*Aside.*

Lady Sneer. Go, go ; you are a couple of annoying wretches.

Mrs. Can. Well, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so—for give me permission to say, that Mrs. Ogle—

Sir Peter T. Madam, madam, I beg your pardon—there's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues.—But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the Lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope, you'll not take her part.

Lady Sneer. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well said, Sir Peter ! but you are a cruel creature too non appreciative yourself of a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

Sir Peter T. Ah ! madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady T. True Sir Peter : I believe they are so near related that they can never be united.

Sir Benj. B. Or rather, madam, suppose them to be man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

Lady T. But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal, I believe he would have it stopped by legislation.

Sir Peter T. For heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an Act for the Preservation of Fame, I believe there are many who would thank them for the bill.

Lady Sneer. O Lud ! Sir Peter ; would you deprive us of our pleasant past time.

Sir Peter T. Yes madam ; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

Lady Sneer. Go, you monster !

Mrs. Can. But, surely, you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear ?

Sir Peter T. Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too ; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to be compensated by any of the tale-bearers.

Crabt. Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some basis.

Sir Peter T. Oh, nine out of ten of the malicious inventions are founded on some ridiculous falsification of truth.

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Lady Sneer. Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room ?

Enter a Servant, who whispers Sir Peter

Sir Peter T. I'll be with them directly.—I'll get away unperceived. [*Apart.*

Lady Sneer. Sir Peter, you are not going to leave us ?

Sir Peter T. Your ladyship must excuse me ; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me.

[*Exit Sir Peter.*

Sir Benj. B. Well—certainly, Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a strange being : I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he were not your husband.

Lady T. Oh, pray don't mind that ;—come, do let's hear them.

[*Joins the rest of the company going into the next room.*

Joseph S. Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

Maria. How is it possible I should ?—If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities or misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humour, Heaven grant me a double portion of dullness ! God grant me all the dullness a no wit

Joseph S. Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are,—they have no malice at heart.

Maria. Then is their conduct still more contemptible ; for, in my opinion, nothing could excuse the interference of their tongues, but a natural and uncontrollable bitterness of mind.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly, madam ; and it has always been a sentiment of mine, that to propagate a malicious truth wantonly is more despicable than to falsify from revenge. But can you, Maria, feel thus for others, and be unkind to me alone ?—Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion ?

Maria. Why will you distress me by renewing the subject ?

Joseph S. Ah, Maria ! you would not treat me thus, and oppose your guardian Sir Peter's will, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival.

Maria. Ungenerously urged !—But whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

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Lady Sneer. Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room ?

Enter a Servant, who whispers Sir Peter

Sir Peter T. I'll be with them directly.—I'll get away unnoticed. [*Apart.*

Lady Sneer. Sir Peter, you are not going to leave us ?

Sir Peter T. Your ladyship must excuse me ; I'm called away by particular business. But you need not worry I leave my character behind me, at your disposal. [*Exit Sir Peter.*

Sir Benj. B. Well-certainly, Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a strange being : I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he were not your husband.

Lady T. Oh, pray don't mind that ;—come do let's hear them. [*Joins the rest of the company going into the next room.*

Joseph S. Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

Maria. How is it possible to have satisfaction here ? If to raise wicked smiles at the weakness or misfortunes of those who have never injured us by the use of wit or humour, Heaven grant me all the dullness and no wit.

Joseph S. Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are,—they have no wicked intention at heart.

Maria. Then is the reconduct still more detestible ; for in my opinion, nothing could excuse the interference of their tongues, but a natural and uncontrollable bitterness of mind.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly, madam ; and it has always been a sentiment of mine, that to take everyone a malicious without any purpose is more hateful than tell lies of revenge. But can you, Maria feel thus for others, and be unkind to me alone ? I have bear in anticipation of your love and are you going to deny that to me ?

Maria. Why do you make me unhappy by raising the subject again ?

Joseph S. Ah, Maria ! you would not treat me thus, and oppose your guardian Sir Peter's will, but that I see that bad character Charles is still a person favoured by you.

Maria. You are cruel.—But whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his difficulties have lost him the regard even of a brother.

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Lady Teazle returns

Joseph S. Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown: by all that's honest, I swear—— Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle!—[*Aside.*]——You must not—no, you shall not—for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle——

Maria. Lady Teazle!

Joseph S. Yet were Sir Peter once to suspect——

Lady T. What is this, pray? Do you take her for me?

—Child, you are wanted in the next room.— [*Exit Maria.*

—What is all this, pray?

Joseph S. Oh, the most unlucky circumstance in nature! Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I have for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavouring to reason with her when you came in.

Lady T. Indeed! but you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning—do you usually argue on your knees?

Joseph S. Oh, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast —— But, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

Lady T. No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion sanctions.

Joseph S. True—a mere platonic cicisbeo—what every wife is entitled to.

Lady T. Certainly, one must not be out of the fashion.—However, I have so much of my country prejudices left, that, though Sir Peter's ill-humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to——

Joseph S. The only revenge in your power.—Well—I applaud your moderation.

Lady T. Go—you are an insinuating wretch.——But we shall be missed—let us join the company.

Joseph S. But we had best not return together.

Lady T. Well—don't stay; for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you. [*Exit Lady Teazle.*

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Lady Teazle returns

Joseph S. Well, Maria, do not but leave me with a frown : by all that's honest, I swear—Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle !—(*Aside*).—You must not—no, you shall not—for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle—

Maria. Lady Teazle !

Joseph S. Yet were Sir Peter once to suspect——

Lady T. What is this, pray ? Do you take her for me ?—Child, you are wanted in the next room.— [*Exit Maria.*

What is all this, may I ask you ?

Joseph S. Oh, t! most unlucky circumstance in nature. Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I have for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just trying to reason with her when you came in.

Lady T. Indeed ! but you seemed to adopt a very tender way of reasoning—do you usually argue on your knees ?

Joseph S. Oh, she's a child, and I thought a little show of courtesy would please her—But, Lady Teazle, when are u to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised ?

Lady T. No, no ; I begin to think it would be unwise, and you know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion of the time permits.

Joseph S. True I will be a mere platonic lover——what every wife is entitled to have these days.

Lady T. Certainly, one must not be out of the fashion.—However, I have so much of my country prejudices left, that, though Sir Peter's ill humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to betray him—

Joseph S. The only revenge in your power—well—I appreciate your good sense.

Lady T. Go—you are an insinuating wretch.—But hint we shall be missed—let us join the company.

Joseph S. But we had best not return together.

Lady T. Well don't stay ; for Maria hasn't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you. [*Exit Lady Teazle.*

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Joseph S. A curious dilemma my politics have run me into! I wanted, at first, only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle, that she might not be my enemy with Maria; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover. Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last. [*Exit.*

Scene III—Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Rowley and Sir Oliver Surface

Sir Oliver S. Ha! ha! ha! So my old friend is married, hey?—a young wife out of the country.—Ha! ha! ha! that he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long, and sink into a husband at last.

Rowley. But you must not rally him on the subject, Sir Oliver: 'tis a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

Sir Oliver S. Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance!—Poor Peter!—— But you say he has entirely given up Charles,—never sees him, hey?

Rowley. His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure, greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has industriously been led into by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill name. Whereas the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them, his brother is the favourite.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I know there are a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time; and will rob a young fellow of his good name, before he has years to know the value of it.—But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you.—No, no,—if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

Rowley. Then, my life on't, you will reclaim him.——Ah, sir! it gives me new life to find that *your* heart is not turned against him; and that the son of my good old master has one friend, however, left.

Sir Oliver S. What, shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself?—Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

Rowley. Sir, 'tis this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family.—But here comes Sir Peter.

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Joseph S. A curious dilemma my intriguing have run me into. I wanted, at first only to myself a favourite of Lady Teazle, that she might not be my enemy with Maria ; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover. Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a point of a gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I fear at last every body will come to know about my real character. [*Exit.*

Scene III—Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Rowley and Sir Oliver Surface

Sir Oliver S. Ha ! ha ! ha ! so my old friend is married, hey ? a young wife out of the country.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! that he should have pretended to remain an old bachelor so long, become a husband at last.

Rowley. But you must not tease him on the subject, Sir Oliver : 'tis a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

Sir Oliver S. Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance.—Poor Peter !—But you say he has entirely given up Charles,—never sees him you mean ?

Rowley. His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure, greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle which he has been carefully made to believe a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed a great deal to Charles's disreputation. Whereas the truth is, I believe if the Lady is partial to either of them, his brother is her favourite.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, I know there are a set of wicked talkative, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time ; and will rob a young fellow of his good name, before he has years to know the value of it.—But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such scandals, I promise you.—No, no,—if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall do everything to help him.

Rowley. Then, my life on't, you will reclaim him.—Ah, sir, it gives me new life to find that your heart is not turned against him ; and that son of my good old master still now one friend left in this world.

Sir Oliver S. What, shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was of his years myself ?—Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very intelligent youths ; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

Rowley. Sir, 'tis this consideration which gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family.—But here comes Sir Peter.

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Sir Oliver S. Egad, so he does.—Mercy on me!—he's greatly altered—and seems to have a settled married look! One may read *husband* in his face at this distance!

Enter Sir Peter Teazle

Sir Peter T. Hah! Sir Oliver—my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

Sir Oliver S. Thank you—thank you, Sir Peter! and i'faith I am glad to find you well, believe me.

Sir Peter T. Oh! 'tis a long time since we met -fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I have had my share.—But, what! I find you are married, hey?—Well, well—it can't be helped—and so—I wish you joy with all my heart.

Sir Peter T. Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver.—Yes, I have entered into—the happy state;—but we'll not talk of that now.

Sir Oliver S. True, true, Sir Peter: old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting—no, no, no.—

Rowley. Take care, pray, sir.—

Sir Oliver S. Well—so one of my nephews is a wild fellow, hey?

Sir Peter T. Wild!—Ah! my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there; he's a lost young man, indeed. However, his brother will make you amends; Joseph is, indeed, what a youth should be. Everybody in the world speaks well of him.

Sir Oliver S. I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him!—Pshaw! then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue.

Sir Peter T. What, Sir Oliver! do you blame him for not making enemies?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

Sir Peter T. Well, well—you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! plague of his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter; I don't mean to defend Charles's errors: but before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose.

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Sir Oliver S. Egad, so he does.—Mercy on me !—he's greatly changed—and seems to have a settled married look ! One may read husband in his face even from distance !

Enter Sir Peter Teazle

Sir Peter T. Hah ! Sir Oliver—my old friend ! Welcome to England a thousand times !

Sir Oliver S. Thank you— thank you, Sir Peter ! and i'faith I am glad to find you well, believe me.

Sir Peter T. Oh ! 'tis a long time since we met—fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and you must have gone across so many ups and downs.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I have had my share.—But, what ! I find you are married, hey ?—Well, well—it can't be helped—and so—I wish you joy with all my heart.

Sir Peter T. Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver.—Yes, I have entered into—the happy married state ;—but let us not talk of that now.

Sir Oliver S. True, true, Sir Peter : old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting—they should not fellow hear ?

Sir Peter T. Wild !—Ah ! my old friend, I feel sorry your disappointment there ; he's a lost young man, indeed. However his brother will compensate for him ; Joseph is, indeed ; what a youth should be. Everybody in the world speaks well of him.

Sir Oliver S. I am sorry to hear it ; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him.—Pshaw ! then he has become as low to knaves and fools and has abandoned of genius and virtue.

Sir Peter T. Am surprised Sir Oliver that you blame him for not making enemies.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve enemies.

Sir Peter T. Well, well—you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis a pleasure to hear him talk ; he speaks of the best things in life.

Sir Oliver S. Oh ! down with his sentiments ! If he salute me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter ; I don't mean to defend Charles's errors : but before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts ; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something to test them.

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Rowley. And Sir Peter shall own for once he has been mistaken.

Sir Peter T. Oh ! my life on Joseph's honour.

Sir Oliver S. Well—come, give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink your lady's health, and tell you our scheme.

Sir Peter T. *Allons* then !

Sir Oliver S. And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe against your old friend's son. Odds my life ! I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little : for my part, I hate to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth ; 'tis like ivy round a sapling, and spoils the growth of the tree. [*Exeunt.*

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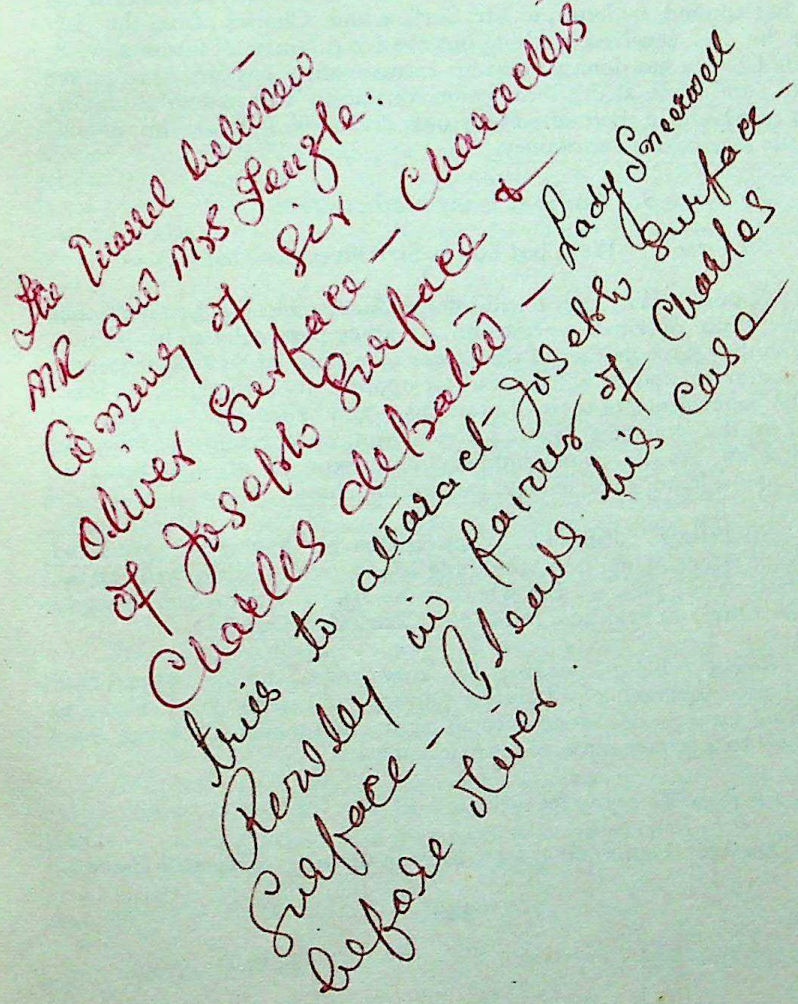
Rowley. And Sir Peter shall own for once he has been mistaken in his trust and judgment.

Sir Peter T. Oh! I can put my life on Joseph's honour.

Sir Oliver S. Well—come give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink your lady's health, and tell you our plan.

Sir Peter T. Allons, then!

Sir Oliver S. And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe against your old friend's son. Odds my life! I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little: for my part, I have to see wisdom and soberness in very young people like ivy round a sapling, and which spoils the growth of the tree. [*Exeunt.*



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ACT III

Scene I—Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Oliver Surface, and Rowley

Sir Peter T. Well, then, we will see this fellow first, and have our wine afterwards :—but how is this, Master Rowley ? I don't see the jest of your scheme.

Rowley. Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied, by letter, to Mr. Surface and Charles ; from the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do ; and he is, at this time, endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

Sir Oliver S. Ah !—he is my brother's son.

Sir Peter T. Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to——

Rowley. Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother, that Stanley has obtained permission to apply personally to his friends, and as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his character, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging, at least, of the benevolence of their dispositions ; and believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother, one, who, in the midst of folly and dissipation, has still, as our immortal bard expresses it,—"a heart to pity, and a hand, open as day, for melting charity."

Sir Peter T. Pshaw ! What signifies his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give ? Well, well—make the trial, if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles's affairs ?

Rowley. Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance.

Sir Peter T. Pray let us have him in.

Rowley. Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs. [*Apart to Servant.*

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ACT III

Scene I—Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Oliver Surface, and Rowley

Sir Peter T. Well, then, we will see this fellow first, and have our wine afterwards :—but how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the fun in going through your plan.

Rowley. Why, Sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied, by letter, to Mr. Surface and Charles : from the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do ; and he is, at this time, endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own difficulties I know he wants—in order to help poor Stanley.

Sir Oliver S. Ah !—he is my brother's son.

Sir Peter T. Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to—

Rowley. Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother, that Stanley has obtained permission to apply personally to his friends, and as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver pretend to be Stanley, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging, at least, of the benevolence of character ; and believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother, one, who, in the midst of folly and corruption, has still, as Shakespeare expresses it,——"a heart to pity, and a hand, open as day, for melting charity."

Sir Peter T. Pshaw ! What does it matter his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give ? Well, well make the trial, if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles's affairs ?

Rowley. Below, waiting his orders, and no one can give him better news. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a monetary ruin on account of extravagant expenses.

Sir Peter T. Pray let us have him in.

Rowley. Tell Mr. Moses to walk upstairs. [*Apart to Servant.*

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Sir Peter T. But, pray, why should you suppose he will speak the truth ?

Rowley. Oh ! I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles, but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived ; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his own interests : I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall speedily produce him to remove some of your prejudices.

Sir Peter T. I have heard too much on that subject.

Rowley. Here comes the honest Israelite.—(Moses)—

Enter Moses

-This is Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew, Charles.

Moses. Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him ; but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

Sir Oliver S. That was unlucky, truly ; for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

Moses. None at all ; I hadn't the pleasure of knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

Sir Oliver S. Unfortunate, indeed !—But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses ?

Moses. Yes, he knows that ;—this very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the City, who does not know him, and will, I believe, advance him some money.

Sir Peter T. What,—one Charles has never had money from before ?

Moses. Yes,—Mr. Premium, of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.

Sir Peter T. Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me !—Charles, you say, does not know Mr. Premium ?

Moses. Not at all.

Sir Peter T. Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation : go with my friend Moses, and represent Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

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Sir Peter T. But listen, why should you suppose he will speak the truth ?

Rowley. Oh ! I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles, but through the kindness of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived ; so that you may depend another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected involved in a kind of forgery, and shall speedily produce him to remove some of your misgivings.

Sir Peter T. I have heard too much on the subject.

Rowley. Here comes the honest Israelite.——

Enter Moses

—This is Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I understand you have lately had great business transactions with my nephew, Charles.

Moses. Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him ; but he was ruined before he came to me for help.

Sir Oliver S. That was unlucky, truly ; for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents to do the same about.

Moses. None at all ; I hadn't the pleasure of knowing his difficulties till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

Sir Oliver S. Unfortunate, indeed !——But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses ?

Moses. Yes, he knows that ;—this very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the City, who does not know him, and will, I believe, advance him some money.

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Sir Peter T. Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me !—

— —Charles, you say, does not know Mr. Premium ?

Moses. Not at all.

Sir Peter T. Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old artificial tale of a poor relation : go with my friend Moses, and present yourself as Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

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Sir Oliver S. Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as old Stanley.

Sir Peter T. True—so you may.

Rowley. Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure ;—however, Moses, you understand Sir Peter, and will be faithful ?

Moses. You may depend upon me ;—this is near the time I was to have gone.

Sir Oliver S. I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Moses ——But hold ! I have forgot one thing—how the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew ?

Moses. There's no need—the principal is Christian.

Sir Oliver S. Is he ? I'm very sorry to hear it. But then again, a'n't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a money-lender ?

Sir Peter T. Not at all ; 'twould not be out of character if you went in your own carriage—would it, Moses ?

Moses. Not in the least.

Sir Oliver S. Well—but how must I talk ?—there's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.

Sir Peter T. Oh ! there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands—hey, Moses ?

Moses. Yes, that's a very great point.

Sir Oliver S. I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan, at least.

Moses. If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.

Sir Oliver S. Hey !—what the plague !—how much then ?

Moses. That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per cent. ; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double.

Sir Peter T. A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver !

Sir Oliver S. Truly, I think so—and not unprofitable.

Moses. Then you know, you haven't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of an old friend.

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Sir Oliver S. Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as old Stanley.

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Moses. There's no need—Sir Premium is Christian.

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Moses. Not in the least.

Sir Oliver S. Well—but how must I talk ? there's certainly some particular way of money-lenders and mode of treating that I should be familiar with.

Sir Peter T. Oh ! there's not much to learn. The great point as I take it, is to be exacting enough in your demands—am I right Moses ?

Moses. Yes, that's a very great point.

Sir Oliver S. I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that, I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan, at least.

Moses. If you ask him no more than that, he will become suspicious and know your identity.

Sir Oliver S. Hey !—what the plague !—how much then ?

Moses. That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per cent ; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very bad, you may ask for double the amount.

Sir Peter T. A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver !

Sir Oliver S. Yes, I think so—and not unprofitable.

Moses. Then, you know, you haven't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of an old friend.

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Sir Oliver S. Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

Moses. And your friend is an unconscionable dog: but you can't help it!

Sir Oliver S. My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

Moses. Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

Sir Oliver S. He is forced to sell stock at a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.

Sir Peter T. I'faith, Sir Oliver—Mr. Premium, I mean, you'll soon be master of the trade. But, Moses! would not you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill? That would be in character, I should think.

Moses. Very much.

Rowley. And lament that a young man now must be at years of discretion before he is suffered to ruin himself?

Moses. Ay, great pity!

Sir Peter T. And abuse the public for allowing merit to an Act, whose only object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the rapacious gripe of usury, and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate without being undone by coming into possession.

Sir Oliver S. So—so—Moses shall give me farther instructions as we go together.

Sir Peter T. You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! never fear: my tutor appears so able, that though Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner.

[*Exeunt Sir Oliver Surface and Moses.*

Sir Peter T. So, now, I think Sir Oliver will be convinced: you are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

Rowley. No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently.—I see Maria, and want to speak with her. [*Exit Rowley.*] I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph—I am determined I will do it—he will give me his opinion sincerely.

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Sir Oliver S. Oh ! I borrow it of a friend, do I ?

Moses. And your friend is an unscrupulous dog : but you can't help it !

Sir Oliver S. My friend an unscrupulous dog, is he ?

Moses. Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to sell his shares at a great loss for the cash money.

Sir Oliver S. He is forced to sell shares at a great loss, is he ? Well, that's very kind of him.

Sir Peter T. I'faith, Sir Oliver—Mr. Premium, I mean, you'll soon be master of the trade. But, Moses ! would not you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill ? That would be quite appropriate, I think.

Moses. Very much.

Rowley. And lament that a young man now must be at years of discretion before he is suffered to ruin himself.

Moses. Ay, great pity !

Sir Peter T. And abuse the public for allowing merit to an Act, whose only object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the greedy hands of money-lenders and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate without being ruined before they got anything at all.

Sir Oliver S. So—so—Moses shall give me farther instruction s as we go together.

Sir Peter T. You will not have much time, for your nephew lives near by.

Sir Oilver S. Oh ! never fear : my tutor appears so able, that though Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner.

[*Exeunt, Sir Oliver Surface and Moses.*

Sir Peter T. So, now, I think Sir Oilver will be convinced : you are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

Rowley. No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say now.—I see Maria, and want to speak with her. (*Exit Rowley*). I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph—I am determined I will do it—he will give me his sincere opinion.

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Enter Maria

So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you ?

Maria. No, sir ; he was engaged.

Sir Peter T. Well, Maria, do you not reflect, the more you converse with that amiable young man, what return his partiality for you deserves ?

Maria. Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent importunity on this subject distresses me extremely—you compel me to declare, that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention, whom I would not prefer to Mr. Surface.

Sir Peter T. So—here's perverseness !—No, no, Maria, 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart. [Refers to Charles).

Maria. This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him : I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it culpable, if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his distresses.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, pity him as much as you please ; but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

Maria. Never to his brother !

Sir Peter T. Go—perverse and obstinate ! but take care, madam ; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is : don't compel me to inform you of it.

Maria. I can only say, you shall not have just reason. 'Tis true, by my father's will, I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute ; but must cease to think you so, when you would compel me to be miserable. [*Exit Maria.*

Sir Peter T. Was ever man so crossed as I am ? everything conspiring to fret me ! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. But here comes my helpmate ! She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little !

Enter Lady Teazle

Lady T. Lud ! Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria ? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by.

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Enter Maria

So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you ?

Maria. No, sir ; he was still busy there.

Sir Peter T. Well, Maria, do you not find out, the more you talk with that amiable young man, what return his sentiment for you deserves ?

Maria. Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent insistence on this subject distresses me extremely—you compel me to declare, that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention, whom I would not prefer to Mr. Surface.

Sir Peter T. So—here's arrogance !—No, no, Maria, 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

Maria. This is unkind, Sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor writing to him : I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy of my regard. Yet I cannot take it as undesirable, if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart shows some pity for his distresses.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, pity him as much as you please but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

Maria. Never to his brother !

Sir Peter T. You are perverse and obstinate ! but take care, madam ; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is ; don't compel me to make it known to you.

Maria. I can only say, you shall not have just reason to be so. 'Tis true, by my father's will, I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute ; but must stop to think you so, when you would compel me to be unhappy and distressed. [*Exit Maria.*

Sir Peter T. Was ever man so unhappy as I am ? everything conspiring to irritate me ! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. But here comes my helpmate. She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little !

Enter Lady Teazle

Lady T. Lud ! Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria ? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not near you.

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Sir Peter T. Ah ! Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.

Lady T. I am sure I wish I had ; for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good-humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you ?

Sir Peter T. Two hundred pounds ! what, a'n't I to be in a good humour without paying for it ? But speak to me thus, and i'faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it ; but seal me a bond for the repayment.

Lady T. Oh, no—there—my note of hand will do as well.

[*Offering her hand.*

Sir Peter T. And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you :—but shall we always live thus, hey ?

Lady T. If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you'll own you were tired first.

Sir Peter T. Well—then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady T. I assure you, Sir Peter, good-nature becomes you—you look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth, and chuck me under the chin, you would ; and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing—didn't you ?

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive——

Lady T. Ay—so I was, and would always take your part, when my acquaintance used to abuse you, and turn you into ridicule.

Sir Peter T. Indeed !

Lady T. Ay, and when my cousin Sophy has called you a stiff, peevish old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I have always defended you, and said, I didn't think you so ugly by any means, and I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

Sir Peter T. And you prophesied right ; and we shall now be the happiest couple——

Lady T. And never differ again ?

Sir Peter T. No, never !—though at the same time, indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very seriously ; for in all our little quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began first.

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Sir Peter T. Ah ! Lady Teazle ; you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.

Lady T. I am sure I wish I had : for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you ?

Sir Peter T. Two hundred pounds. what, a'n't I to be in a good humour without paying for it ? But speak to me thus and i'faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it ; but give me a kiss for the repayment.

Lady T. Oh, no—there—my note of hand will do as well.
[*Offering her hand.*

Sir Peter T. And you shall no longer quarrel with me for not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you :—but shall we always live happily like this ?

Lady T. If you please, I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you admit that you were tired first.

Sir Peter T. Well—then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady T. I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you—you look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth, and chuck me under the chin, you would : and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing—didn't you ?

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive—

Lady T. As—so I was, and would always take your part, when my friends used to abuse you, and turn you into a subject for their amusement.

Sir Peter T. Indeed !

Lady T. Yes, and when my cousin Sophy called you a stiff, peevish old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I always defended you, and said, I didn't think you so ugly by any means, and I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

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Lady T. I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter : indeed, you always gave the provocation.

Sir Peter T. Now see, my angel ! take care—contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.

Lady T. Then don't you begin it, my love !

Sir Peter T. There, now ! you—you are going on. You don't perceive, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.

Lady T. Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear——

Sir Peter T. There ! now you want to quarrel again.

Lady T. No, I am sure I don't :—but if you will be so peevish——

Sir Peter T. There now ! who begins first ?

Lady T. Why you, to be sure. I said nothing—but there's no bearing your temper.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam : the fault's in your own temper.

Lady T. Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

Sir Peter T. Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

Lady T. You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.

Sir Peter T. Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me, if ever I try to be friends with you any more !

Lady T. So much the better.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam : 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you—a pert, rural coquette, that had refused half the honest 'squires in the neighbourhood.

Lady T. And I am sure I was a fool to marry you—an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.

Sir Peter T. Ay, ay, madam ; but you were pleased enough to listen to me : you never had such an offer before.

Lady T. No ! didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match ? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married.

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Lady T. I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter : indeed, you always gave the provocation.

Sir Peter T. Now, see, my angel ! take care—contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.

Lady T. Then don't you begin it, my love.

Sir Peter T. There, now ! you—you are going on. You don't understand, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.

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Sir Peter T. There now ! you want to quarrel again.

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Sir Peter T. No, no, madam : the fault's in your own temper.

Lady T. Well, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

Sir Peter T. Your cousin Sophy is an immodest impertinent gipsy.

Lady T. You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.

Sir Peter T. Now may all the misfortunes of marriage be doubled on me, if ever I try to be friends with you any more !

Lady T. So much the better.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam ; 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me and I was a mad man to marry you—an impertinent village coquette, that had refused half the honest squires in the neighbourhood.

Lady T. And I am sure I was a fool to marry you—an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, madam ; but you were pleased enough to listen to me : you never had such an offer before.

Lady T. No ! didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match ? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has been so unhappy on account of my marrying you.

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Sir Peter T. I have done with you, madam ! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad.—Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam.—Yes, madam, *you* and Charles are—not without grounds——

Lady T. Take care, Sir Peter ! you had better not insinuate any such thing ! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

Sir Peter T. Very well, madam ! very well ! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce !—I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors.—Let us separate, madam.

Lady T. Agreed ! agreed !—And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple—and never differ again, you know—ha ! ha ! ha ! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you—so, bye-bye. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Plagues and tortures ! Can't I make her angry either ! Oh, I am the most miserable fellow ! but I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper : no ! she may break my heart, but she shan't keep her temper. [*Exit.*

Scene II—Charles Surface's House

Enter Trip, Moses, and Sir Oliver Surface

Trip. Here, master Moses ! if you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether—what's the gentleman's name ?

Sir Oliver S. Mr. Moses, what is my name ?

Moses. Mr. Premium.

Trip. Premium—very well. [*Exit Trip, taking snuff.*

Sir Oliver S. To judge by the servants, one wouldn't believe the master was ruined. But what !—sure, this was my brother's house ?

Moses. Yes, Sir ; Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph, with the furniture, pictures, etc., just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a piece of extravagance in him.

Sir Oliver S. In my mind, the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half.

Enter Trip

Trip. My master says you must wait, gentlemen : he has company, and can't speak with you yet.

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Sir Peter T. I have done with you, madam ! you are an unfeeling, ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad.—Yes, madam, I now believe the scandal about you and Charles, madam—Yes, madam, you and Charles are—not without grounds——

Lady T. Take care, Sir Peter ! you had better not hint at any such thing ! I will not be suspected without cause let me tell you.

Sir Peter T. Very well, madam ! very well ! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce !—I will make an example of myself for the benefit of all the old bachelors—Let us separate, madam.

Lady T. Agreed ! agreed !—And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple—and never differ again, you know—ha ! ha ! ha ! Well, you are going to be in a rage, I see, I shall only interrupt you—so, bye-bye.

Sir Peter T. Plagues and tortures ! Can't I make her angry either ! Oh, I am the most miserable fellow ! but I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper : no ! she may break my heart, but I will not let her to be so easy and cool. [*Exit.*

Scene II—Charles Surface's House

Enter Trip, Moses and Sir Oliver Surface

Trip. Here, master Moses ! if you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether—what's the gentleman's name ?

Sir Oliver S. Mr. Moses, what is my name ?

Moses. Mr. Premium.

Trip. Premium—very well. [*Exit Trip, taking snuff.*

Sir Oliver S. To judge by the servants, one wouldn't believe the master was ruined. But what ! sure, this was my brother's house ?

Moses. Yes, sir ; Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph, with the furniture, pictures, etc., just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a piece of extravagance in him.

Sir Oliver S. In my mind Joseph was a good deal more to be blamed for saving money by selling the house which had been his father's.

Enter Trip

Trip. My master says you must wait ! gentlemen ; he has company and can't speak with you right now.

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Sir Oliver S. If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not send such a message ?

Trip. Yes, yes, sir ; he knows you are here—I did not forget little Premium : no, no, no.

Sir Oliver S. Very well ; and I pray, sir, what may be your name ?

Trip. Trip, sir ; my name is Trip, at your service.

Sir Oliver S. Well then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess ?

Trip. Why, yes—here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably enough ; but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear —and not very great either—but fifty pounds a year, and find our own bags and bouquets.

Sir Oliver S. Bags and bouquets ! halters and bastinadoes !

[*Aside.*

Trip. And, *a propos*, Moses—have you been able to get me that little bill discounted ?

Sir Oliver S. Wants to raise money too !—mercy on me ! Has his distresses, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns.

[*Aside.*

Moses. 'Twas not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

Trip. Good lack, you surprise me ! My friend Brush has endorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill 'twas the same as cash.

Moses. No ! 'twouldn't do.

Trip. A small sum—but twenty pounds. Hark'ee, Moses, do you think you couldn't get it me by way of annuity ?

Sir Oliver S. An annuity ! ha ! ha ! a footman raise money by way of annuity ! Well done, luxury, egad ! [*Aside.*

Moses. Well, but you must insure your place.

Trip. Oh, with all my heart ! I'll insure my place, and my life too, if you please.

Sir Oliver S. It's more than I would your neck. [*Aside.*

Trip. But then, Moses, it must be done before this d—d Register takes place ; one wouldn't like to have one's name made public, you know.

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Sir Oliver S. If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not send such a message ?

Trip. Yes, yes, sir ; he knows you are here—I did not forget little Premium ; no, no, no.

Sir Oliver S. Very well ; and I pray, sir, what may be your name ?

Trip. Trip, sir ; my name is Trip, at your service.

Sir Oliver S. Well, then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess ?

Trip. Why, yes—here are three or four of us pass our time happily enough ; but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear and not very great either but fifty pounds a year, and must provide our outfittings.

Sir Oliver S. Bags and bouquets ! you deserve hangings and whippings. [*Aside.*

Trip. .And to the point. Moses—have you been able to get me that little bill discounted ?

Sir Oliver S. Wants to raise money too ! mercy on me. Does he, out of vanity like a lord make it his aim to be in debt, and fostered by men for payment. [*Aside.*

Moses. 'Twas not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

Trip. Good luck, you surprise me ! My friend Brush has endorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill 'twas the same as cash.

Moses. No ! 'twouldn't do.

Trip. A small sum—but twenty pounds. Listen, Moses, do you think you couldn't get it me by way of annuity ?

Sir Oliver S. Ha ! ha ! a footman raise money by way of annuity. Well done, luxury, egad. [*Aside.*

Moses. Well, but you must insure yourself against losing your job.

Trip. Oh, with all my heart ! I'll insure my place, and my life too, if you please.

Sir Oliver S. It's more than I would your neck. [*Aside.*

Trip. But then, Moses, it must be done before this d—d Register takes place ; one wouldn't like to have one's name made public, you know.

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Moses. No, certainly. But is there nothing you could deposit ?

Trip. Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately ; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of redemption before November—or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver :—these, I should think, Moses, with a few pair of point ruffles, as a collateral security—hey, my little fellow ?

Moses. Well, well. [*Bell rings.*

Trip. Egad, I heard the bell ! I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, little Moses ! This way, gentlemen. I'll insure my place, you know.

Sir Oliver S. If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation, indeed ! [*Exeunt.*

Scene III—Charles Surface, Careless, etc. etc., discovered at a table drinking wine

Charles S. 'Fore heaven, 'tis true !—there's the great degeneracy of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and politeness ; but, plague on't, they won't drink.

Careless. It is so indeed, Charles ! they give in to all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit. Oh, certainly society suffers by it intolerably ; for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to mantle over a glass of bright Burgundy, their conversation is become just like the Spa water they drink, which has all the pertness and flatulence of Champaigne, without the spirit or flavour.

1st Gent. But what are they to do who love play better than wine ?

Careless. True : there's Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under a hazard regimen.

Charles S. Then he'll have the worst of it. What ! you wouldn't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn ? For my part, egad, I am never so successful as when I am a little merry : let me throw on a bottle of Champaigne, and I never lose—at least, I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

2nd Gent. Ay, that I believe.

Charles S. And then, what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who is an abjurer of wine ? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats atop is the maid that has bewitched you.

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Moses. No, certainly. But is there nothing you could deposit as security for the loan ?

Trip. Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has discarded lately ; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with permission of redemption before November—or you shall have the right to claim the French valvet, or a bond, on the blue and silver :—these I should think, Moses, with a few pair of point as additional security will they do my little fellow ?

Moses. Well, well.

[*Bell rings.*

Trip. Egad, I heard the bell. I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, little Moses. This way, gentlemen, I'll insure my place, you know.

Sir Oliver S. If the man be a shadow of the master, that is the temple of corruption indeed ! [*Exeunt.*

Scene III—Charles Surface, Careless, etc., etc., discovered at a table drinking wine

Charles S. Force heaven, 'tis true !—there's the great immorality of the age. Many of our friends have taste, spirit, and culture but, down it, they wont' drink.

Careless. It is so indeed, Charles ! they indulge in all the import luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit. Oh, certainly society suffers by it very much ; for now, instead of the social spirit of wit that used to sparkle over a glass of bright Burgundy, their conversation is become just like the memoral water they drink, which has all the unpleasant test of Champaigne, without the spirit or flavour.

1st Gent. But what are they to do who love gambling better than wine ?

Careless. True : there's Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under diet for gambling.

Charles S. Then he'll have the worst of it. What ! you wouldn't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn ? For my part, egad, I am never so successful as when I am a little jolly : let me throw on a bottle of Champaigne, and I never lose—at least, I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

2nd Gent. Yes, I believe that.

Charles S. And then, what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who solemnly renounces wine ? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties and she that floats atop is the image of the maid that had made you mad by her beauty.

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Careless. Now then, Charles, be honest, and give us your real favourite.

Charles S. Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible—on earth.

Careless. Oh ! then we'll find some canonised vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant !

Charles S. Here then, bumpers, you rogues ! bumpers ! Maria ! Maria !—

Sir Harry Bumper. Maria who ?

Charles S. Oh, damn the surname—'tis too formal to be registered in Love's calendar ; but now, Sir Harry, beware, we must have beauty superlative.

Careless. Nay, never study, Sir Harry : we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.

Sir Harry B. Egad, so I have ! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

SONG

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen ;
Here's to the widow of fifty ;
Here's to the flaunting extravagant queen,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

Chorus. Let the toast pass,—
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize ;
Now to the maid who has none, sir :
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but *one*, sir.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow ;
Now to her that's as brown as a berry :
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the girl that is merry.

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Careless. Now, then, Charles, be honest, and tell us who is your real favourite.

Charles S. Why, I have withheld her name only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must drink successive toasts to women who are her equals in charm and beauty.

Careless. Oh ! then we'll find some virgin priestesses or heathen goddesses that will do, I must say.

Charles S. Here then, bumpers, you rogues ! bumpers ! Maria ! Maria !——

Sir Harry Bumper. Maria who ?

Charles S. Oh, damn the surname—'tis too formal to be registered in Love's calendar ; but now, Sir Harry you must use the superlative to describe her beauty.

Careless. Well, never mind, Sir Harry : we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.

Sir Harry B. Egad, so I have ! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

SONG

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen ;
Here's to the widow of fifty ;
Here's to the flaunting extravagant queen,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

Chorus. Let the toast pass,—
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize ;
Now to the maid who has none, sir :
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but one, sir.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow ;
Now to her that's as brown as a berry :
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the girl that is merry.

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Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

All. Bravo! bravo!

Enter Trip, and whispers Charles Surface

Charles S. Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little. Careless, take the chair, will you?

Careless. Nay, prithee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropt in by chance?

Charles S. No, faith! To tell you the truth, 'tis a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

Careless. Oh, damn it! let's have the Jew in.

1st Gent. Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

2nd Gent. Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

Charles S. Egad, with all my heart! Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in—though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

Careless. Charles, let us give them some generous Burgundy, and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.

Charles S. Oh, hang 'em, no! wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities; and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery. inspire their knavery.

Enter Trip, Sir Oliver Surface, and Moses

Charles S. So; honest Moses, walk in: walk in, pray, Mr. Premium—that's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Moses?

Moses. Yes, sir.

Charles S. Set chairs, Trip—sit down, Mr. Premium—glasses. Trip—sit down, Moses. Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a sentiment; here's *Success to usury*!—Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

Moses. *Success to usury*!

Careless. Right, Moses—usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

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Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather ;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim.
And let us e'en toast them together.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

All. Bravo ! bravo !

Enter Trip and whispers Charles Surface

Charles S. Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little. Careless, take the chair, will you ?

Careless. Well, let me ask you Charles, what now ? This is one of your uncomparable beauties, I suppose, has dropt in by chance ?

Charles S. No, faith ! To tell you the truth, 'tis a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

Careless. Oh, damn it ! let's have the Jew in.

Ist Gent. Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

2nd Gent. Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

Charles S. Egad, with all my heart ! Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in—though there's one of them a stranger I can tell you.

Careless. Charles, let us give them some generous Burgundy, and perhaps they'll grow dutiful.

Charles S. Oh, hang 'em, no ! wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities ; and to make them drink would only be to inspire their knavery.

Enter Trip, Sir Oliver Surface, and Moses

Charles S. So honest Moses, walk in : walk in pray, Mr. Premium—that's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Moses ?

Moses. Yes, sir.

Charles S. Set chair, Trip—sit down, Mr. Premium—glasses, Trip—sit down Moses. Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a display of emotion ; here's success to usury !—Moses fill the gentleman a bumper.

Moses. Success to usury !

Careless. Right, Moses—usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

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Sir Oliver S. And—*here's all the success it deserves* !

Resi Talad

Careless. No, no, that won't do ! Mr. Premium, you have demurred at the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

1st Gent. A pint bumper, at least.

Moses. Oh, pray, sir, consider—Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

Careless. And therefore loves good wine.

2nd Gent. Give Moses a quart glass—this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

Careless. Here, now for't ! I'll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

Sir Oliver S. Nay, pray, gentlemen—I did not expect this usage.

Charles S. No, hang it, you shan't ! Mr. Premium's a stranger.

Sir Oliver S. Odd ! I wish I was well out of their company. [*Aside.*

Careless. Plague on 'em then !—if they don't drink, we'll not sit down with them. Come, Harry, the dice are in the next room—Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business with the gentlemen ?

Charles S. I will ! I will ! [*Exeunt.*] Careless !

Careless. [*Returning.*] Well !

Charles S. Perhaps I may want you.

Careless. Oh, you know I am always ready : word, note, or bond, 'tis all the same to me. [*Exit.*

Moses. Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy ; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is——

Charles S. Pshaw ! have done.—Sir, my friend Moses is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression : he'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this : I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money—you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend—I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent sooner than not have it ; and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without further ceremony.

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Sir Oliver S. And—here's all the success it deserves !

Careless. No, no, that won't do ! Mr. Premium, you have hesitated at the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

1st Gent. A pint bumper, at least.

Moses. Oh, pray, sir, consider—Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

Careless. And therefore loves good wine.

2nd Gent. Give Moses a quart glass—this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

Careless. Here, now for't ! I'll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

Sir Oliver S. Well to be frank, gentlemen—I did not expect this treatment.

Charles S. No, hang it, you shan't ! Mr. Premium's a stranger.

Sir Oliver S. Odd ! I wish I was well out of their company. [*Aside.*

Careless. Plague on 'em then !—if they don't drink, we'll not sit down with them. Come, Harry, the dice are in the next room. Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business with the gentlemen ?

Charles S. I will ! I will ! [*Exeunt.*] *Careless* !

Careless. [*Returning*] Well !

Charles S. Perhaps I may want you.

Careless. Oh, you know I am always ready whether by my word, by putting my name to a note, or bond—I am ready to help you anyway you please. [*Exit.*

Moses. Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy ; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is—

Charles S. Pshaw ! have done.—Sir, my friend Moses is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression : he'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this : I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money —you I take to be a wise old fellow, who have got money to lend— I am stupid enough to give fifty percent sooner than not have it ; and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are friends at once, and may proceed to business without further ceremony.

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Sir Oliver S. Exceeding frank, upon my word.—I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

Charles S. Oh no, sir! plain dealing in business I always think best.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I like you the better for it—however, you are mistaken in one thing; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend; but then he's an unconscionable dog, isn't he, Moses?

Moses. But you can't help that.

Sir Oliver S. [And must sell stock to accommodate you— mustn't he, Moses?

Moses. Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie!

Charles S. Right. People that speak truth generally do: but these are trifles, Mr. Premium. What! I know money isn't to be bought without paying for't!

Sir Oliver S. Well—but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

Charles S. Not a mole-hill, nor a twig, but what's in the bough-pots out of the window!

Sir Oliver S. Nor any stock, I presume?

Charles S. Nothing but live stock—and that's only a few pointers and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connections?

Sir Oliver S. Why, to say truth, I am.

Charles S. Then you must know that I have a dev'lish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations?

Sir Oliver S. That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.

Charles S. Oh no!—there can be no doubt. They tell me I'm a prodigious favourite, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

Sir Oliver S. Indeed! this is the first I've heard of it.

Charles S. Yes, yes, 'tis just so—Moses knows 'tis true, don't you, Moses?

Moses. Oh yes! I'll swear to't.

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Sir Oliver S. You are very much frank, upon my word.—I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

Charles S. Oh, no, sir ! plain dealing in business I always think best.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I like you the better for it—however you are mistaken in one thing ; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend ; but then he's an unscrupulous dog, isn't he, Moses ?

Moses. But you can't help that.

Sir Oliver S. And must sell shares to help you-mustn't he, Moses ?

Moses. Yes, indeed ! You know I always speak the truth, and hate to tell a lie.

Charles S. Right, People that speak truth generally do : but these are small matters, Mr. Premium. What ! I know money isn't to be bought without paying for't.

Sir Oliver S. Well—but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose ?

Charles S. Not a mole hill, nor a twig, but what's in the flown pot out of the window.

Sir Oliver S. Nor any shares, I presume ?

Charles S. Nothing but live stock—and that's only a few trained dog, and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connections ?

Sir Oliver S. Why, to say truth, I am.

Charles S. Then you must know that I have a devilish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations ?

Sir Oliver S. That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard ; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.

Charles S. Oh no !—there can be no doubt. They tell me I'm one of his great favourites, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

Sir Oliver S. Indeed ! this is the first time I've heard of it.

Charles S. Yes, yes, 'tis just so—Moses knows 'tis true, don't you, Moses ?

Moses. Oh yes ! I'll swear to't.

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Sir Oliver S. Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Now I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you, a post-obit on Sir Oliver's life ; though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me, that I give you my word, I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to him.

Sir Oliver S. Not more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me—for I might live to a hundred, and never see the principal.

Charles S. Oh yes, you would—the moment Sir Oliver dies, you know, you would come on me for the money.

Sir Oliver S. Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome dun you ever had in your life.

Charles S. What ! I suppose you're afraid that Sir Oliver is too good a life ?

Sir Oliver S. No, indeed, I am not ; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

Charles S. There again now you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor uncle Oliver ! Yes, yes, he breaks apace, I'm told—and is so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him.

Sir Oliver S. No ! ha ! ha ! ha ! so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him ! ha ! ha ! ha ! egad—ha ! ha ! ha !

Charles S. Ha ! ha !—you're glad to hear that, little Premium ?

Sir Oliver S. No, no, I'm not.

Charles S. Yes, yes, you are—ha ! ha ! ha !—You know that mends your chance.

Sir Oliver S. But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over ?—nay, some say he is actually arrived ?

Charles S. Pshaw ! sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on't he's at this moment at Calcutta—isn't he, Moses ?

Moses. Yes, certainly.

Sir Oliver S. Very true, as you say, you must know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority—haven't I, Moses ?

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Sir Oliver S. Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Now I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you a lord on Sir Oliver's life ; though at the same time the old fellow has been so generous to me, that I give you my word, I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to him.

Sir Oliver S. Not more than I should, I assure you, But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me— for I might live to a hundred, and never see the principal money.

Charles S. Oh, yes, you would—the moment Sir Oliver dies, you know, you would come on me for the money.

Sir Oliver S. Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome fool you ever had in your life.

Charles S. What ! I suppose you're afraid that Sir Oliver is too good in health to die.

Sir Oliver S. No, indeed, I am not ; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

Charles S. There again now you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him very much, poor uncle is so much altered lately that his nearest relations cannot recognise him.

Sir Oliver S. No ! ha ! ha ! ha ! so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him ! ha ! ha ! ha ! egad—ha ! ha ! ha !

Charles S. Ha ! ha !—you're glad to hear that, little Premium ?

Sir Oliver S. No, no, I'm not.

Charles S. Yes, yes, you are—ha ! ha ! ha !—You know that brightens your chance.

Sir Oliver S. But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over ?—well, some say he is actually arrived ?

Charles S. Pshaw ! sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on't he's at this moment at Calcutta isn't he, Moses ?

Moses. Yes, certainly.

Sir Oliver S. Very true, as you say, you must know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority—haven't I, Moses ?

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Moses. Yes, most undoubted !

Sir Oliver S. But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately—is there nothing you could dispose of ?

Charles S. How do you mean ?

Sir Oliver S. For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate ?

Charles S. O Lud !—that's gone long ago.—Moses can tell you how better than I can.

Sir Oliver S. Good lack ! all the family race-cups and corporation bowls ! [*Aside.*]—Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and compleat——

Charles S. Yes, yes, so it was—vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.

Sir Oliver S. Mercy upon me ! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom ! [*Aside.*] Pray, what are become of the books ?

Charles S. You must inquire of the auctioneer, Master Premium, for I don't believe even Moses can direct you.

Moses. I know nothing of books.

Sir Oliver S. So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose ?

Charles S. Not much, indeed ; unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above, and if you have a taste for paintings, egad, you shall have 'em a bargain.

Sir Oliver S. Hey ! what the devil ! sure, you wouldn't sell your forefathers, would you ?

Charles S. Every man of them to the best bidder.

Sir Oliver S. What ! your great-uncles and aunts ?

Charles S. Ay, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers, too.

Sir Oliver S. Now I give him up. [*Aside.*] What the plague, have you no bowels for your own kindred ? Odd's life, do you take me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood ?

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Moses. Yes, most undoubted !

Sir Oliver S. But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately—is there nothing you could dispose of ?

Charles S. What do you mean ?

Sir Oliver S. For instance, now I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of heary old plate ?

Charles S. O Lud !—that's gone long ago.—Moses can tell you how better than I can.

Sir Oliver S. Good luck ! all the family gold or silver cups and corporation bowls ! [*Aside.*]—Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and complete—

Charles S. Yes, yes, so it was a great collection a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself by retaining the library.

Sir Oliver S. Mercy upon me ! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom. [*Aside.*] Pray, what are become of the books ?

Charles S. You must inquire of the auctioneer, Master Premium, for I don't believe even Moses can tell you.

Moses. I know nothing of books.

Sir Oliver S. So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose.

Charles S. Not much, indeed ; unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above, and if you have a taste for paintings, egad, you shall have 'em at a bargain price.

Sir Oliver S. Hey ! what the devil ! sure, you wouldn't sell your forefathers portraits, would you ?

Charles S. Every man of them to the best bidder.

Sir Oliver S. What ! your great uncles and aunts ?

Charles S. Yes, and my great grandfathers and grandmothers, too.

Sir Oliver S. Now I give him up [*Aside.*] What the hell, have you no compassion for your own kindred ? Odd's life, do you take me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood ?

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Charles S. Nay, my little broker, don't be angry : what need you care if you have your money's worth ?

Sir Oliver S. Well, I'll be the purchaser : I think I can dispose of the family canvas. Oh, I'll never forgive him this ! never !

[*Aside.*

Enter Careless

Careless. Come, Charles, what keeps you ?

Charles S. I can't come yet : i'faith we are going to have a sale above stairs ; here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors.

Careless. Oh, burn your ancestors !

Charles S. No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you : egad, you shall be auctioneer ; so come along with us.

Careless. Oh, have with you, if that's the case. Handle a hammer as well as a dice-box !

Sir Oliver S. Oh, the profligates ! [*Aside.*

Charles S. Come, Moses, you shall be appraiser, if we want one. Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business ?

Sir Oliver S. Oh yes, I do, vastly. Ha ! ha ! ha ! yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction—ha ! ha !—Oh, the prodigal ! [*Aside.*

Charles S. To be sure ! when a man wants money, where the plague should he get assistance if he can't make free with his own relations ? [*Exeunt.*

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Charles S. Well, my little broker, don't be angry : What need you care if you have your money's worth ?

Sir Oliver S. Well, I'll be the purchaser : I think I can dispose of the family canvas. Oh, I'll never forgive him this ! never ! [*Aside.*

Enter Careless

Careless. Come Charles, what keeps you ?

Charles S. I can't come yet : i'faith we are going to have a sale above stairs ; here's little Premium will buy all the paintings of my ancestors.

Careless. Oh, burn your ancestors !

Charles S. No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you : egad, you shall be auctioneer ; so come along with us.

Careless. Oh, lets get on with it if that's the case. Handle a hammer as well as a dice box !

Sir Oliver S. Oh, the profligates ! [*Aside.*

Charles S. Come, Moses, you shall be valuer, if we want one Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business.

Sir Oliver S. Oh yes, I do, vastly. Ha ! ha ! ha ! yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction—ha ! ha ! Oh, the prodigal ! [*Aside.*

Charles S. To be sure ! when a man wants money where the hell should he get assistance if he can't be without any formality with his own people. [*Exeunt.*

Pradman Kaisher Dhar
M.A. (Pol. Sc. Eco. Eng. Hist.) B.
Motiyar Rainawari
SRINAGER-190003
KASHMIR

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ACT IV

Scene I—Picture Room at Charles's

Enter Charles Surface, Sir Oliver Surface, Moses, and Careless

Charles S. Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in ;—here they are, the family of the Surfaces, up to the Conquest.

Sir Oliver S. And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

Charles S. Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of portrait painting ;—no *volontier grace* and expression. Not like the works of your modern Raphaels, who give you the strongest resemblance, yet contrive to make your portrait independent of you ; so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture.—No, no ; the merit of these is the inveterate likeness—all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature besides.

Sir Oliver S. Ah ! we shall never see such figures of men again.

Charles S. I hope not.——Well, you see, Master Premium, what a domestic character I am ; here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family.——But, come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer ; here's an old gouty chair of my father's will answer the purpose.

Careless. Ay, ay, this will do.——But, Charles, I haven't a hammer ; and what's an auctioneer without his hammer ?

Charles S. Egad, that's true ;—what parchment have we here ? —Oh, our genealogy in full. Here, Careless,—you shall have no common bit of mahogany, here's the family tree for you, you rogue, —this shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

Sir Oliver S. What an unnatural rogue !—an *ex post facto* parricide ! [*Aside.*

Careless. Yes, yes, here's a bit of your generation indeed ;—faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 'twill serve not only as a hammer, but a catalogue into the bargain.——Come, begin——A-going, a-going, a-going !

Charles S. Bravo, Careless !—Well, here's my great-uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the battle of Malplaquet.—What say you, Mr. Premium ?—look at him—there's a hero, not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipt captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be.—What do you bid ?

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ACT IV

Scene I—Picture Room at Charles's

Enter Charles Surface, Sir Oliver Surface, Moses, and Careless

Charles S. Walk in, gentlemen, please walk in ;—here are the portraits of the family of the Surfaces, upto the antiquity.

Sir Oliver S. And in my opinion it is a goodly collection.

Charles S. Yes, yes these are done in the realistic spirit of portrait painting ; no easy natural grace and expression. Not like the works of your modern Raphaels, who give you the strongest resemblance, yet manage to make your portrait quite different from you, so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture—No, no ; the merit of these is the definite likeness—all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature besides.

Sir Oliver S. Ah ! we shall never see such figures of men again.

Charles S. I hope not.—Well, you see, Master Premium, what ordinary person I am ; here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family.—But, come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer ; here's an old bulging chair of my father's will serve purpose.

Careless. Yes, yes, this will do.—But, Charles, I haven't a hammer ; and what's an auctioneer without his hammer ?

Charles S. Egad, that's true ;—what goatskin have we here ? Oh, our family history in full. Here, Careless,—you shall have no common bit of mahogany, here's the family tree for you, you rogue,—this shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

Sir Oliver S. What an unnatural rogue ! a retrospective murderer of his ancestors. [*Aside.*

Careless. Yes, yes, here's a bit of your generation indeed ;—faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 'twill serve not only as a hammer, but a list of items into the bargain.—Come, begin—Well, lets start, lets start.

Charles S. Bravo, Careless !—Well, here's my great uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the battle of Malplaquet.—What say, you, Mr. Premium ? —look at him—there's a hero, not cut out of his feathers, as your modern without feathers captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be.—What do you bid ?

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Moses. Mr. Premium would have *you* speak.

Charles S. Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not dear for a staff-officer.

Sir Oliver S. Heaven deliver me! his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds! [*Aside.*]—Well, sir, I take him at that.

Charles S. Careless, knock down my uncle Richard.—Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great-aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be in his best manner, and a very formidable likeness.—There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock.—You shall have her for five pounds ten—the sheep are worth the money.

Sir Oliver S. Ah! poor Deborah! a woman who set such a value on herself! [*Aside.*]—Five pounds ten—she's mine.

Charles S. Knock down my aunt Deborah!—Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs. You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

Charles S. Well, take that couple for the same.

Moses. 'Tis good bargain.

Charles S. Careless!—This, now, is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit.—What do you rate him at, Moses?

Moses. Four guineas.

Charles S. Four guineas!—Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig.—Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the woolsack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

Sir Oliver S. By all means.

Careless. Gone!

Charles S. And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt, Esquires, both members of Parliament, and noted speakers, and what's very extraordinary, I believe, this is the first time they were ever bought or sold.

Sir Oliver S. That is very extraordinary, indeed! I'll take them at your own price, for the honour of Parliament.

Careless. Well said, little Premium!—I'll knock them down at forty.

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Moses. Mr. Premium would have you speak.

Charles S. Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not costly for a staff officer.

Sir Oliver S. Heaven deliver me. his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds ! [*Aside.*] well, sir, I take him at that.

Charles S. Careless, knock down my uncle Richard.—Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be in his best manner, and a very great likeness.—There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock.—You shall have her for five pounds ten—the sheep are worth the money.

Sir Oliver S. Ah ! poor Deborah ! a woman who set such a value on herself ! [*Aside.*]—Five pounds ten—she's mine.

Charles S. Knock down my aunt Deborah !—Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs. You see, Moses, these pictures were painted some time ago, when gentlemen wore wigs, and the ladies own hair.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, truly, head dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

Charles S. Well, take that couple for the same.

Moses. 'Tis good bargain.

Charles S. Careless. This, now, is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit.—What do you offer for him, Moses ?

Moses. Four guineas !

Charles S. Four guineas.—Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig.—Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the seat of the judge, do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

Sir Oliver S. By all means.

Careless. Gone !

Charles S. And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt, Esquires, both members of Parliament, and noted speakers, and what's very extraordinary, I believe, this is the first time they were ever bought or sold.

Sir Oliver S. That is very extraordinary, indeed ! I'll take them at your own price, for the honour of Parliament.

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Charles S. Here's a jolly fellow—I don't know what relation, but he was mayor of Manchester : take him at eight pounds.

Sir Oliver S. No, no ; six will do for the mayor.

Charles S. Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.

Sir Oliver S. They're mine.

Charles S. Careless, knock down the mayor and aldermen.—But plague on't, we shall be all day retailing in this manner ; do let us deal wholesale : what say you, little Premium ? Give us three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

Careless. Ay, ay, that will be the best way.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, anything to accommodate you ;—they are mine. But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.

Careless. What, that ill-looking little fellow over the settee ?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, sir, I mean that, though I don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow, by any means.

Charles S. What, that ?—Oh ! that's my uncle Oliver ; 'twas done before he went to India.

Careless. Your uncle Oliver !—Gad, th n you'll never be friends, Charles. That, now, to me, is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw ; an unforgiving eye, and a damned disinheriting countenance ! an inveterate knave, depend on't. Don't you think so, little Premium ?

Sir Oliver S. Upon my soul, sir, I do not ; I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive ;—but I suppose uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber ?

Charles S. No, hang it ; I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.

Sir Oliver S. The rogue's my nephew after all ! [*Aside.*]—But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

Charles S. I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it.—Oons, haven't you got enough of them ?

Sir Oliver S. I forgive him everything ! [*Aside.*]—But sir, when I take a whim in my head I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.

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Charles S. Here's jolly fellow—I don't know what relation, but he was mayor of Manchester : take him at eight pounds.

Sir Oliver S. No, no ; six will do for the mayor.

Charles S. Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.

Sir Oliver S. They're mine.

Charles S. Careless knock down the mayor and aldermen—But damn it, we shall be all day engaged in petty business in this manner ; do let us deal wholesale : what say you, little Premium ? Give us three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

Careless. Yes, yes, that will be the best way.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, anything to help you ;—they are mine. But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.

Careless. What, that ill looking little fellow over the settee ?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, sir, I mean that, though I don't think him so ill looking a little fellow, by any means.

Charles S. What, that ?—Oh ! that's my uncle Oliver ; 'twas done before he went to India.

Careless. Your uncle Oliver !—Gad, then you'll never be friends, Charles. That, now, to me, is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw ; an unforgiving eye, and a damped disinheriting countenance an inconsiderate knave, depend on't. Don't you think so, little Premium ?

Sir Oliver S. Upon my soul, sir I do not ; I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive ;—but I suppose uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lot ?

Charles S. No, hang it ; I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.

Sir Oliver S. The rogue's my nephew at all. [*Aside.*]—But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

Charles S. I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it.—Oons, haven't you got enough of them ?

Sir Oliver S. I forgive him everything ! [*Aside.*] But sir, when I take a whim in my head I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.

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Charles S. Don't tease me, master broker ; I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.

Sir Oliver S. How like his father the dog is ! [*Aside.*]—Well, well, I have done.——I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance—[*Aside.*]——Here is a draft for your sum.

Charles S. Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds.

Sir Oliver S. You will not let Sir Oliver go ?

Charles S. Zounds ! no !—I tell you once more.

Sir Oliver S. Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time—but give me your hand on the bargain ; you are an honest fellow, Charles—I beg pardon, sir, for being so free.—Come, Moses.

Charles S. Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow ! But hark'ee, Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

Charles S. But, hold ; do now send a genteel conveyance for them, for, I assure you, they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

Sir Oliver S. I will, I will—for all but Oliver.

Charles S. Ay, all but the little nabob.

Sir Oliver S. You're fixed on that ?

Charles S. Peremptorily.

Sir Oliver S. A dear extravagant rogue ! [*Aside.*]—Good-day ! —Come, Moses.——Let me hear now who calls him profligate !

[*Exeunt Sir Oliver Surface and Moses.*

Careless. Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw !

Charles S. Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow.—Hah ! here's Rowley ; do, Careless, say I'll join the company in few moments.

Careless. I will—but don't let that old blockhead persuade you to squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense ; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows.

Charles S. Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

Careless. Nothing else.

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Charles S. Don't tease me, master broker ; I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.

Sir Oliver S. How like his father the dog is ! [*Aside.*]—Well, well, I have done.—I did not understand it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance [*Aside*].—Here is a draft for your sum.

Charles S. Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds.

Sir Oliver S. You will not let Sir Oliver go ?

Charles S. Zounds ! no !—I tell you once more.

Sir Oliver S. Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time—but give me your hand on the bargain ; you are an honest fellow, Charles—I beg pardon, sir, for being so free. Come, Moses.

Charles S. Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow ! But listen Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

Charles S. But, hold ; do now send a good conveyance for them, for, I assure you, they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

Sir Oliver S. I will, I will—for all but Oliver.

Charles S. Yes, all but the little nabob.

Sir Oliver S. You're fixed on that ?

Charles S. Terribly.

Sir Oliver S. A dear extravagant rogue ! [*Aside.*]—Good-day !—Come, Moses.—Let me hear now who calls him wicked and loose !

[*Exeunt Sir Oliver Surface and Moses.*

Careless. Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw !

Charles S. Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow.—Hah ! here's Rowley ; do, Careless, say I'll join the company in few moments.

Careless. I will—but don't let that old stupid fellow persuade you to squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense ; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exacting fellows.

Charles S. Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

Careless. Nothing else.

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Charles S. Ay, ay, never fear. [*Exit Careless.*]—Soh ! this was an odd old fellow, indeed.—Let me see—two-thirds of this is mine by right, five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore Heaven ! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for !——Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful servant.——

Enter Rowley

Hah ! old Rowley ! egad, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

Rowley. Yes, I heard they were a-going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

Charles S. Why, there's the point ! my distresses are so many, that I can't afford to part with my spirits ; but I shall be rich and splenetic, all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations ; to be sure 'tis very affecting : but you see they never move a muscle, so why should I ?

Rowley. There's no making you serious a moment.

Charles S. Yes, faith, I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here, get me this changed directly, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately to old Stanley.

Rowley. A hundred pounds ! Consider only——

Charles S. Gad's life, don't talk about it : poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have some one call that has a better right to the money.

Rowley. Ah ! there's the point ! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb——

Charles S. "Be just before you're generous".—Why, so I would if I could ; but Justice is an old lame hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace with Generosity for the soul of me.

Rowley. Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection——

Charles S. Ah, ay, it's all very true ; but, hark'ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I'll give ; so damn your economy, and now for hazard. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II—The Parlour

Enter Sir Oliver Surface and Moses

Moses. Well, sir, I think, as Sir [illegible] said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory ; 'tis great pity [illegible] extravagant.

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Charles S. Yes, yes, never fear. [*Exit Careless.*]—Soh ! this was an odd old fellow, indeed.—Let me see—two thirds of this is mine by right, five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore Heaven ! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for ! —Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful servant.——

Enter Rowley

Hah ! Old Rowley ! egad you are just come in time to take leave of your old friends.

Rowley. Yes, I heard they were a-going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many troubles.

Charles S. Why, there's the point ! my troubles are so many that I can't afford to part with my spirits ; but I shall be rich and angry, all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations to be sure 'tis very moving : but you see they never move a muscle, so why should I ?

Rowley. There's no, making you serious a moment.

Charles S. Yes ! faith, I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here, get me this changed directly, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately to old Stanley.

Rowley. A hundred pounds ! Consider only—

Charles S. Gad's life, don't talk about it : poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have some tradesman who has a better right to the money.

Rowley. Yes, you are right. I never will stop addressing you with the old proverb——

Charles S. "Be just before you're generous". Why, so I would if I could ; but Justice is an old lame hobbling ill natured hag, and I can't get her to keep pace with Generosity for my life.

Rowley. Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's thought——

Charles S. Yes, yes, it's all very true ; but, listen, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I'll give so ; damn your economy, and now for gambling. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II—The Parlour

Enter Sir Oliver Surface and Moses

Moses. Well, sir, I think as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory ; 'tis great pity he's so extravagant.

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Sir Oliver S. True, but he would not sell my picture

Moses. And loves wine and women so much.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And games so deep.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture.——Oh, here's Rowley.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase——

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

Rowley. And here has he commissioned me to re-deliver you part of the purchase-money—I mean, though, in your necessitous character of old Stanley.

Moses. Ah ! there is the pity of all ; he is so damned charitable.

Rowley. And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy them.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolence too.—But now I am no more a broker, and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

Rowley. Not yet awhile ; Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time.

Enter Trip

Trip. Oh, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out ; this way——Moses, a word.

[*Exeunt Trip and Moses.*

Sir Oliver S. There's a fellow for you—would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master.

Rowley. Indeed !

Sir Oliver S. Yes, they are now planning an annuity business. —Ah ! Master Rowley, in my days servants were content with the follies of their masters, when they were worn a little threadbare ; but now, they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the gloss on.

[*Exeunt.*

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Sir Oliver S. True, but he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And loves wine and women so much.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And so involved in gambling.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture——Oh, here's Rowley.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase——

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, our young rascal has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

Rowley. And here has he commissioned me to redeliver you part of the purchase money—I mean, though, in your poor needy character of old Stanley.

Moses. Ah ! there is the pity of all ; he is so damned charitable.

Rowley. And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and although this hundred pound would have been sufficient for them.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolence too.——But now I am no more a broker, and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

Rowley. Not yet awhile ; Sir Peter, I am sure, will be visiting him about this time.

Enter Trip

Trip. Oh, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out ; this way—Moses, a word. [*Exeunt Trip and Moses.*

Sir Oliver S. There's a fellow for you—would you believe it, that puppy pleaded the Jew on our coming and wanted to raise money before he got to his master.

Rowley. Is that so ?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, they are now planning an annuity business—Ah ! Master Rowley, in my days servants were happy with the follies of their masters, when they had nothing but rags to wear ; but now, they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the shine on. [*Exeun*

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Scene III—A Library

Joseph Surface and a Servant

Joseph S. No letter from Lady Teazle ?

Serv. No, sir.

Joseph S. I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet, I wish I may not lose the heiress, through the scrape I have drawn my if into with the wife ; however, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour. [*Knocking heard without.*

Serv. Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

Joseph S. Hold !—See whether it is or not before you go to the door : I have a particular message for you, if it should be my brother.

Serv. 'Tis her ladyship, sir ; she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

Joseph S. Stay, stay ; draw that screen before the window—that will do ;—my opposite neighbour is maiden lady of so anxious a temper.—[*Servant draws the screen, and exit.*]—I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria ; but she must by no means be let into that secret,—at least, till I have her more in my power.

Enter Lady Teazle

Lady T. What, sentiment in soliloquy now ? Have you been very impatient ?—O Lud ! don't pretend to look grave.—I vow I couldn't come before.

Joseph S. Oh, madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

Lady T. Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know, Sir Peter is grown so ill-natured to me of late, and so jealous of Charles too—that's the best of the story, isn't it ?

Joseph S. I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

[*Aside.*

Lady T. I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced ; don't you, Mr. Surface ?

Joseph S. Indeed I do not. [*Aside.*]—Oh, certainly I do ! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced, how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

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Scene III—A Library

Joseph Surface and a Servant

Joseph S. Is there no letter from Lady Teazle ?

Serv. No, sir.

Joseph S. I am surprised she has not sent any note in case prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me Yet I wish I may not lose the heiress, through my involvement with the wife ; however, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour. [*Knocking heard without*

Serv. Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

Joseph S. Hold !—See whether it is or not before you go to the door : I have a particular message for you, if it should be my brother.

Serv. 'Tis her ladyship, sir ; she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

Joseph S. Stay, stay ; draw that screen before the window—that will do ;—my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so curious a temper.—[*Servant draws the screen, and exit.*]—I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria ; but she must by no means be let into that secret —at least, till I have her more in my power.

Enter Lady Teazle

Lady T. What, my sentimental lover in soliloquy now ? Have you been very impatient ?—O Lud ! don't pretend to look grave.—I vow I couldn't come before.

Joseph S. Oh, madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

Lady T. Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know, Sir Peter is grown so ill-natured to me of late, and so jealous of Charles too—that's the best of the story, isn't it ?

Joseph S. I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up, [*Aside*

Lady T. I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him and then perhaps he would be convinced ; don't you, Mr. Surface ?

Joseph S. Indeed I do not. [*Aside.*]—Oh, certainly I do ! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced, how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

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Lady T. Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking to have the most ill-natured things said of one ?—And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too—that's what vexes me.

Joseph S. Ay, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance—without foundation ; yes, yes, there's the mortification, indeed ; for when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.

Lady T. No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice ; but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody—that is, of any friend ; and then Sir Peter too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart—indeed 'tis monstrous !

Joseph S. But, my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife, and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compcat is broken, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to outwit him.

Lady T. Indeed !—so that if he suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for't.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly—for your husband should never be deceived in you,—and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment.

Lady T. To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my innocence——

Joseph S. Ah ! my dear madam, there is the great mistake : 'tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's opinion ?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct, and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences ?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and outrageous at his suspicions ?—why, the consciousness of your innocence.

Lady T. 'Tis very true !

Joseph S. Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

Lady T. Do you think so ?

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Lady T. Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking to have the most ill-natured things said of one?—And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too—that's what makes me so angry.

Joseph S. Yes, madam, surely that is the provoking circumstance—without foundation; yes, yes, there's the pain, indeed; for when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved this censure.

Lady T. No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their wickedness; but to attack, when I am really so innocent, and when I never say an ill-natured thing of anybody—that is, of any friend; and then Sir Peter too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart—indeed 'tis monstrous!

Joseph S. But, my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife, and withdraws his confidence from her, the original contract is broken, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to challenge him.

Lady T. Indeed!—so that if he suspects me without cause it follows that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him for that suspicion.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly—for your husband should never be deceived in you,——and in that case it becomes you to be weak in compliment to his understanding.

Lady T. To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the actual fact of my innocence——.

Joseph S. Ah! my dear madam, there is the great mistake: 'tis this very pride of conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's opinion?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct, and apt to run into a thousand little foolish acts? why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and outrageous at his suspicions?—why, the consciousness of your innocence.

Lady T. 'Tis very true!

Joseph S. Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a negligible false stop, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

Lady T. Do you think so?

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Joseph S. Oh! I am sure on't; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for, in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

Lady T. So, so; then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to secure my reputation?

Joseph S. Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

Lady T. Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny!

Joseph S. An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

Lady T. Why, if my understanding were once convinced——

Joseph S. Oh, certainly, madam, your understanding should be convinced.—Yes, yes—Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you thought wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

Lady T. Don't you think we may as well leave *honour* out of the question?

Joseph S. Ah! the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you.

Lady T. I doubt they do indeed; and I will fairly own to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than your *honourable logic*, after all.

Joseph S. Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of—

[*Taking her hand.*

Enter Servant

Sdeath, you blockhead—what do you want?

Serv. I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you would not choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

Joseph S. Sir Peter!—Oons—the devil!

Lady T. Sir Peter! O Lud—I'm ruined—I'm ruined!

Serv. Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

Lady T. Oh! I'm quite undone! What will become of me? Now, Mr. Logic—Oh! he's on the stairs—I'll get behind here—and if ever I'm so imprudent again [*Goes behind the screen.*

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Joseph S. Oh ! I am sure on't ; and then you would find all scandal would stop at once for in shc ., your character at present is like a person in a morbid condition absolutely dying from too much health.

Lady T. So, so, then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to establish reputation ?

Joseph S. Exactly so, upon my credit, madam.

Lady T. Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest method of avoiding a bad name.

Joseph S. It is a most trustworthy one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

Lady T. Why, if my understanding were once convinced——

Joseph S. Oh, certainly, madam, your understanding should be convinced——Yes, yes—Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you thought wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

Lady T. Don't you think we may as well leave formality out of the question ?

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Lady T. I doubt they do indeed ; and I will fairly admit to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than your respectable argument, after all.

Joseph S. Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of——

[*Taking her hand.*

Enter Servant

'Sdeath, you fool—what do you want ?

Serv. I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you would not choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

Joseph S. Sir Peter !—Oons—the devil !

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Joseph S. Give me that book.

[*Sits down. Servant pretends to adjust his hair.*

Enter Sir Peter

Sir Peter T. Ay, ever improving himself—Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface—

Joseph S. Oh! my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon—[*Gaping—throws away the book.*]—I have been dozing over a stupid book.—Well, I am much obliged to you for this call. You haven't been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room.—Books, you know, are the only things in which I am a coxcomb.

Sir Peter T. 'Tis very neat indeed.—Well, well, that's proper; and you can make even your screen a source of knowledge—hung, I perceive, with maps?

Joseph S. Oh, yes, I find great use in that screen.

Sir Peter T. I daresay you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry.

Joseph S. Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Well, I have a little private business—

Joseph S. You need not stay (*to the Servant*).

Serv. No, sir. [*Exit.*

Joseph S. Here's a chair, Sir Peter—I beg—

Sir Peter T. Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburthen my mind to you—a point of the greatest moment to my peace; in short, my dear friend Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

Joseph S. Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

Sir Peter T. Ay, 'tis too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what's worse, I have pretty good authority to suppose she has formed an attachment to another.

Joseph S. You astonish me!

Sir Peter T. Yes; and, between ourselves, I think I've discovered the person.

Joseph S. How! you alarm me exceedingly.

Sir Peter T. Ay, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathise with me!

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[*Sits down. Servant pretends to adjust his hair.*

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Joseph S. Yes—believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

Sir Peter T. I am convinced of it.—Ah! it is a happiness to have a friend whom we can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

Joseph S. I haven't the most distant idea. It can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite!

Sir Peter T. Oh, no! What say you to Charles?

Joseph S. My brother! impossible!

Sir Peter T. Ah! my dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you. You judge of others by yourself.

Joseph S. Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery.

Sir Peter T. True—but your brother has no sentiment—you never hear him talk so.

Joseph S. Yet, I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

Sir Peter T. Ay,—but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

Joseph S. That's very true.

Sir Peter T. And there's, you know, the difference of our ages makes it improbable that she should have any very great affection for me; and if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

Joseph S. That's true, to be sure—they *would* laugh.

Sir Peter T. Laugh—ay, and make ballads, and paragraphs, and the devil knows what of me.

Joseph S. No—you must never make it public.

Sir Peter T. But then again—that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.

Joseph S. Ay, there's the point.—When ingratitude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

Sir Peter T. Ay—I, that was, in a manner, left his guardian; in whose house he had been so often entertained; who never in my life denied him—my advice.

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Joseph S. Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to discover the treachery in another.

Sir Peter T. True—but your brother is not sentimental—you never hear him talk of my wife.

Joseph S. Yet, I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

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Sir Peter T. And there's, you know, the difference of our ages makes it improbable that she should have any very great affection for me ; and if she were to be weak, and I were to make it public why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

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Joseph S. No—you must never make it public.

Sir Peter T. But then again—that the nephew of my old friend Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me most.

Joseph S. Yes, there's the point—When ingratitude injures you as pointedly, the wound has double danger in it.

Sir Peter T. Yes—I, that was, in a manner, left his guardian ; in whose house he had been so often entertained ; who never in my life refrained from giving him good counsel.

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Joseph S. Oh, 'tis not to be credited. There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure ; but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine—I disclaim kindred with him : for the man who can break the laws of hospitality, and tempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

Sir Peter T. What a difference there is between you ! What noble sentiments !

Joseph S. Yet, I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

Sir Peter T. I am sure I wish to think well of her, and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her ; and, in our last quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall have her own way, and be her own mistress in that respect for the future ; and if I were to die, she will find I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on.—By one, she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live ; and, by the other, the bulk of my fortune at my death.

Joseph S. This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous.—I wish it may not corrupt my pupil. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Yes, I am determined she shall have no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

Joseph S. Nor I, if I could help it. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. And now, my dear friend, if you please, we will talk over the situation of your affairs with Maria.

Joseph S. [*Softly.*]—Oh, no, Sir Peter ; another time, if you please.

Sir Peter T. I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affections.

Joseph S. I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate ! [*Softly.*]—'Sdeath, I shall be ruined every way. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion for Maria, I'm sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

Joseph S. Pray, Sir Peter, now, oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking of, to bestow a thought on my own concerns. The man who is entrusted with his friend's distresses can never——

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Joseph S. Oh, 'tis not to be believed. There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure ; but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine—I renounce him because for the man who can break the laws of hospitality, and seduce the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded the most dangerous man in society.

Sir Peter T. What a difference there is between you and your brother. How noble, you are !

Joseph S. Yet, I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

Sir Peter T. I am sure I wish to think well of her, and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her ; and, in our last quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall have her own way, and be her own mistress in that respect for the future ; and if I were to die, she will find I have not been inattentive to her—interest while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on—By one, she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live ; and, by the other, the bulk of my fortune at my death.

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Enter Servant

Well, sir ?

Serv. Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and says he knows you are within.

Joseph S. 'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within—I'm out for the day.

Sir Peter T. Stay—hold—a thought has struck me :—you shall be at home.

Joseph S. Well, well, let him up. [*Exit Servant.*] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you.—Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere—then do you tax him on the point we have been talking, and his answer may satisfy me at once.

Joseph S. Oh, fie, Sir Peter ! would you have me join in so mean a trick ?—to trepan my brother too ?

Sir Peter T. Nay, you tell me you are sure he is innocent ; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me : here, behind this screen will be—Hey ! what the devil ! there seems to be one listener there already—I'll swear I saw a petticoat !

Joseph S. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet, you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either ! Hark'ee, 'tis a little French milliner —a silly rogue that plagues me,—and having some character to lose, on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

Sir Peter T. Ah ! you rogue ! But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

Joseph S. Oh, 'twill never go any further, you may depend upon it.

Sir Peter T. No ! then, faith, let her hear it out.—Here's a closet will do as well.

Joseph S. Well, go in there.

Sir Peter T. Sly rogue ! sly rogue !

[*Going into the closet.*

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Sir Peter T. Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you.—Before Charles comes, let me pride myself somewhere—then do you sound him on the point we have been talking, and his answer may satisfy me at once.

Joseph S. Oh, for shame, Sir Peter ! would you have me join in so mean a trick ?—to cheat my brother too ?

Sir Peter T. Well, you tell me you are sure he is innocent ; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me : here, behind this screen will be—Hey ! what the devil ! there seems to be one listener there already—I'll swear I saw a petticoat !

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Joseph S. A narrow escape, indeed ! and a curious situation I'm in, to part man and wife in this manner.

Lady T. [*Peeping.*]—Couldn't I steal off ?

Joseph S. Keep close, my angel !

Sir Peter T. [*Peeping.*]—Joseph, tax him home.

Joseph S. Back, my dear friend !

Lady T. Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in ?

Joseph S. Be still, my life !

Sir Peter T. [*Peeping.*]—You're sure the little milliner won't blab ?

Joseph S. In, in, my good Sir Peter.—'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to the door.

Enter Charles Surface

Charles S. Holla, brother ! what has been the matter ? Your fellow would not let me up at first. What ! have you had a Jew or a wench with you ?

Joseph S. Neither, brother, I assure you.

Charles S. But what has made Sir Peter steal off ? I thought he had been with you.

Joseph S. He *was*, brother ; but hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

Charles S. What ! was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him ?

Joseph S. No, sir : but I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

Charles S. Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men.—But how so, pray ?

Joseph S. To be plain with you, brother—he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

Charles S. Who, I ? O Lud ! not I, upon my word.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! so the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he ?—or, what is worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband ?

Joseph S. This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh——

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Charles S. Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men—But in what way, please let me know.

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Charles S. Who, I ? O Lud ! not I, upon my word.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! so the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he ?—or, what is worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband ?

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Charles S. True, true, as you were going to say—then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

Joseph S. Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this. [*Aloud.*

Charles S. To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me ; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement :—besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

Joseph S. But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you——

Charles S. Why, look'ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonourable action ; but if a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way—and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father——

Joseph S. Well !

Charles S. Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your morality, that's all.—But, brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly, by naming *me* with Lady Teazle ; for, 'faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

Joseph S. Oh, for shame, Charles ! This retort is foolish.

Charles S. Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances——

Joseph S. Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

Charles S. Egad, I'm serious.—Don't you remember one day when I called here——

Joseph S. Nay, prithee, Charles——

Charles S. And found you together——

Joseph S. Zounds, sir ! I insist——

Charles S. And another time when your servant——

Joseph S. Brother, brother, a word with you !—Gad, I must stop him. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Informed, I say, that——

Joseph S. Hush ! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

Charles S. How, Sir Peter ! Where is he ?

Joseph S. Softly ; there ! [*Points to the closet.*

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Joseph S. Oh, for shame, Charles! This counter attack is very bad indeed.

Charles S. Well, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances.——

Joseph S. Well, well, sir, try to be serious.

Charles S. Egad, I'm serious.—Don't you remember one day when I called here——

Joseph S. Well, let me request you Charles—

Charles S. And found you together—

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Charles S. And another time when your servant—

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Charles S. Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth !

Joseph S. No, no——

Charles S. I say, Sir Peter, come into court.—[*Pulls in Sir Peter.*]—What ! my old guardian !—What ! turn inquisitor, and take evidence incog. ?

Sir Peter T. Give me your hand, Charles—I believe I have suspected you wrongfully ; but you mustn't be angry with Joseph—'twas my plan !

Charles S. Indeed !

Sir Peter T. But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did : what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

Charles S. Egad, then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more —wasn't it, Joseph ? [*Apart to Joseph.*

Sir Peter T. Ah ! you would have retorted on him.

Charles S. Ay, ay, that was a joke.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

Charles S. But you might as well have suspected *him* as *me* in this matter, for all that—mightn't he, Joseph ? [*Apart to Joseph.*

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I believe you.

Joseph S. Would they were both well out of the room ! [*Aside.*

Enter Servant, and whispers Joseph Surface

Sir Peter T. And in future perhaps we may not be such strangers.

Joseph S. Gentlemen, I beg pardon—I must wait on you downstairs : here is a person come on particular business.

Charles S. Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

Joseph S. They must not be left together. [*Aside.*]—I'll send this man away, and return directly.——Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner. [*Apart to Sir Peter, and goes out.*

Sir Peter T. I ! not for the world ! [*Apart to Joseph.*]—Ah ! Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment.—Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment.

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Charles S. Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth !

Joseph S. No, no——

Charles S. I say, Sir Peter, come into court.—[*Pulls in Sir Peter*] What ! my old guardian !—What ! you have become an investigator and take evident in an assumed character.

Sir Peter T. Give me your hand, Charles—I believe I have suspected you wrongfully ; but mustn't be angry with Joseph—'twas my plan !

Charles S. Indeed !

Sir Peter T. But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did : what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

Charles S. Egad, then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more—wasn't it Joseph. [*Apart to Joseph.*

Sir Peter T. Ah ! you would have retorted on him.

Charles S. Yes, yes, that was a joke.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

Charles S. But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter, for all that—mightn't he, Joseph ? [*Apart to Joseph.*

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I believe you.

Joseph S. I wish they were both well out of the room !

[*Aside.*

Enter Servant, and whispers Joseph Surface

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Sir Peter T. I ! not for the world ! [*Apart to Joseph.*]—Ah ! Charles, if you frequented more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of good feeling—Well there is nothing in the world as noble as a man of noble feeling !

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Charles S. Pshaw! he is too moral by half—and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a gril.

Sir Peter T. No, no,—come, come,—you wrong him.—No, no! Joseph is no rake, but he is no such saint either in that respect. ——I have a great mind to tell him—we should have a laugh at Joseph. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Oh, hang him! He's a very anchorite, a young hermit.

Sir Peter T. Hark'ee—you must not abuse him: he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

Charles S. Why, you won't tell him?

Sir Peter T. No—but—this way. Egad, I'll tell him. [*Aside.*] —Hark'ee—have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

Charles S. I should like it of all things.

Sir Peter T. Then, i'faith, we will—I'll be quit with him for discovering me.—[*Whispers.*] He had a girl with him when I called.

Charles S. What! Joseph? you jest.

Sir Peter T. Hush!—a little French milliner—and the best of the jest is—she's in the room now.

Charles S. The devil she is!

Sir Peter T. Hush! I tell you! [*Points.*

Charles S. Behind the screen! 'Slife, let's unveil her!

Sir Peter T. No, no—he's coming—you shan't, indeed!

Charles S. Oh, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner!

Sir Peter T. Not for the world—Joseph will never forgive me.

Charles S. I'll stand by you——

Sir Peter T. Odds, here he is!

[*Joseph Surface enters just as Charles Surface throws down the screen.*

Charles S. Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful!

Sir Peter T. Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!

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Charles S. Pshaw ! he is too moral by half—and so careful of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl.

Sir Peter T. No, no,—come, come,—you wrong him.—No, no ! Joseph is not wicked, but he is no such saint either in that respect.—I have a great mind to tell him—we should have a laugh at Joseph.

[*Aside.*

Charles S. Oh, hang him ! He's a very saint, a young hermit.

Sir Peter T. Listen—you must not abuse him : he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

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Listen—have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph ?

Charles S. I should like it of all things.

Sir Peter T. Then, i'faith, we will—I'll do something for discovering me.—[Whispers.] He had a girl with him when I called.

Charles S. What ! Joseph ? you are joking.

Sir Peter T. Hush !—a little French milliner—and the best of the jest is—she's in the room now.

Charles S. The devil she is !

Sir Peter T. Hush ! I tell you ! [*Points.*

Charles S. Behind the screen ! 'Slife, let's see her !

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Charles S. Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret. —Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word!—Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter? What! is Morality dumb too?—Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now! All mute!—Well—though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another—so I'll leave you to yourselves—[*Going*]. Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man cause for so much uneasiness.—Sir Peter! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment! [*Exit Charles.*

[*They stand for some time looking at each other.*

Joseph S. Sir Peter—notwithstanding—I confess—that appearances are against me—if you will afford me your patience—I make no doubt—but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

Sir Peter T. If you please, sir.

Joseph S. The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward Maria—I say, sir,—Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper—and knowing my friendship to the family—she, sir, I say—called here—in order that—I might explain these pretensions—but on your coming—being apprehensive—as I said—of your jealousy—she withdrew—and this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

Sir Peter T. A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

Lady T. For not one word of it, Sir Peter!

Sir Peter T. How! don't you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

Lady T. There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.

Sir Peter T. I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am!

Joseph S. [*Aside.*]—'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

Lady T. Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I'll speak for myself.

Sir Peter T. Ay, let her alone, sir; you'll find she'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

Lady T. Hear me, Sir Peter!—I came hither on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her. But I came seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

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Charles S. Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret.—Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me ? Not a word !—Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter ? What ! is morality dumb too ?—Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now ! All without words—Well—though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another—so I'll leave you to yourselves—[Going.]—Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man cause for so much uneasiness.—Sir Peter ! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of noble feeling !

[*Exit Charles.*

[*They stand for some time looking at each other.*

Joseph S. Sir Peter—notwithstanding—I confess—that appearances are against me—if you will give me your patience—I make no doubt—but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

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Joseph S. [*Aside.*] 'Sdeath, madam, will your betray me ?

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Sir Peter T. Yes, let her alone, sir ; you'll find she'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

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Sir Peter T. Now, I believe, the truth is coming indeed!

Joseph S. The woman's mad!

Lady T. No, sir,—she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.—Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me—but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward—I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

[*Exit Lady Teazle.*

Joseph S. Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows——

Sir Peter T. That you are a villain! and so I leave you to your conscience.

Joseph S. You are too rash, Sir Peter; you shall hear me.—The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to——

[*Exeunt Sir Peter and Surface talking.*

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Sir Peter T. Now, I believe, the truth is coming indeed !

Joseph S. The woman's mad !

Lady T. No, sir,—she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.——Sir Peter, I do not expect for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has gone so deep into my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity to my gratitude. As for that smooth tongued hypocrite who would have seduced the wife of his too faithful friend, while he pretended honourable addresses to his ward—I see him now in a light so truly hateful that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

[*Exit Lady Teazle*

Joseph S. Despite all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows——

Sir Peter T. That you are a villain ! and so I leave you to your conscience.

Joseph S. You are too cruel, Sir Peter ; you shall hear me.—The man who shuts out fault by refusing to——

[*Exeunt Sir Peter and Surface talking.*

Screen Scene
Master piece of
Sheridan —
Introd:
Charles Surface
Madam Teazle
Sir Teazle

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ACT V

Scene I—The Library

Enter Joseph Surface and Servant

Joseph S. Mr. Stanley !—and why should you think I would see him ? you must know he comes to ask something.

Serv. Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him.

Joseph S. Pshaw ! blockhead ! to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations !—Well, why don't you show the fellc ' up ?

Serv. I will, sir——Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady——

Joseph S. Go, fool ! [*Exit Servant.*]—Sure Fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a moment ! I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses ! I shan't be able to bestow even a benevolent sent ment on Stanley.—So ! here he comes, and Rowley with him. I mu ry to recover myself, and put a little charity into my face, however. [*Exit.*

Enter Sir Oliver Surface and Rowley

Sir Oliver S. What ! does he avoid us ?—That was he, was it not ?

Rowley. It was, sir. But I doubt you are come a little too abruptly. His nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first to break it to him.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, plague of his nerves ! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking !

Rowley. As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide ; for, to do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

Sir Oliver S. Yet has a string of charitable sen ments at his fingers' ends.

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ACT V

Scene I—The Library

Enter Joseph Surface and Servant

Joseph S. Mr. Stanley you say ! and why do you think I would see him ? you know that he comes to ask for some help.

Serv. Sir, I would not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley, also comes to the door with him.

Joseph S. Pshaw ! blockhead ! to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations !—Well, why don't you show the fellow up ?

Serv. I will, sir.—Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady—

Joseph S. Go, fool ! [*Exit Servant.*]—Sure Fortune never played a man of my nature such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, all destroyed in a moment ! I'm in no mood to listen to other people's difficulties ! I shan't be able to offer even a benevolent emotion on Stanley.—So ! here he comes, and Rowley with him. I must try to recover myself, and pretend to have a little charity into my face, however. [*Exit.*

Enter Sir Oliver Surface and Rowley

Sir Oliver S. What ! is he trying to avoid us ? That was the man, wasn't he ?

Rowley. It was, sir but I think you have come to see him quite suddenly. His nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much of him. I should have gone first to break the news to him.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, hell with his nerves ! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter praises as a man of the most benevolent nature !

Rowley. As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide ; for, to do him justice, he appears to have as much pretence of goodness as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so conscious as to indulge himself in the exercise benevolence.

Sir Oliver S. Yet he has a string of charitable sentiments at his fingers' tips.

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Rowley. Or rather, at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has such faith in as that "Charity begins at home".

Sir Oliver S. And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all.

Rowley. I doubt you'll find it so;—but he's coming. I mustn't seem to interrupt you; and you know immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

Sir Oliver S. True; and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

Rowley. Without losing a moment. [*Exit.*

Sir Oliver S. I don't like the complaisance of his features.

Enter Joseph Surface

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting——Mr. Stanley, I presume.—

Sir Oliver S. At your service.

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down—I entreat you, sir!—

Sir Oliver S. Dear sir—there's no occasion——too civil by half! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley?

Sir Oliver S. I was, sir;—so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have presumed to trouble you.

Joseph S. Dear sir, there needs no apology:—he that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was of that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief.

Sir Oliver S. If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

Joseph S. I wish he was, sir, with all my heart: you should not want an advocate with him, believe me, Sir.

Sir Oliver S. I should not need one—my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent of his charity.

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Rowley. Or rather, at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver ; for I believe there is no sentiment he has such faith in as that "Charity begins at home".

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Sir Oliver S. At your service.

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down—I entreat you, sir !—

Sir Oliver S. Dear sir—there's no occasion—you seem to be extremely polite. [*Aside.*

Joseph S. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley ; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think Mr. Stanley ?

Sir Oliver S. I was, sir ;—so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do dishonour to her wealthy children, else I should not have thought of giving you any trouble.

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Sir Oliver S. If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

Joseph S. I wish he was, sir, with all my heart ; you should not want anybody to plead your use to him, believe me, sir.

Sir Oliver S. I should not need one—my distresses would suffer and for him. But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent of his charity.

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Joseph S. My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy man; but avarice, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose to contradict the report.

Sir Oliver S. What! has he never transmitted you bullion——rupees—pagodas?

Joseph S. Oh, dear sir, nothing of the kind:—No, no—a few presents now and then—china, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers—little more, believe me.

Sir Oliver S. Here's gratitude for twelve thuosand pounds!—Avadavats and Indian crackers! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother: there are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

Sir Oliver S. Not I, for one! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. The sums I have lent him!—Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame; it was an amiable weakness: however, I don't pretend to defend it,—and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Stanley, as my heart dictates.

Sir Oliver S. Dissembler! [*Aside.*]—Then, sir, you can't assist me?

Joseph S. At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

Sir Oliver S. I am extremely sorry——

Joseph S. Not more than I, believe me;—to pity without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Sir Oliver S. Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

Joseph S. You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley. William, be ready to open the door.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

Joseph S. Your very obedient.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, your most obsequious.

Joseph S. You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

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Joseph S. My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy man ; but greed, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing ; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose to contradict what people have heard about his generosity to me.

Sir Oliver S. What ! has he never semitted to you bullion—rupees—pagodas ?

Joseph S. Oh, dear sir, nothing of the kind :—No, no—a few presents now and then—china, shawls congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers—nothing more, believe me.

Sir Oliver S. How ungrateful he is ? there is no mention of twelve thousand pounds !—Avadavats and Indian crackers ! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the reckless spending of my brother : there are very few who would know what I have done for that unfortunate young man, my brother.

Sir Oliver S. Not I, for one ! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. The sums I have lent him !—Indeed I have been very much to blame ; it was a generous weakness : however, I don't pretend to defend it,—and now I feel it doubly responsible, since it has deprived me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Stanley, which is my utmost desire, believe me.

Sir Oliver S. What a great appocrite ! [*Aside.*]—Then, sir, you can't do anything to help me.

Joseph S. At present it pains me to say, I cannot help you ; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

Sir Oliver S. I am extremely sorry—

Joseph S. Not more than I, believe me ;—to pity without the power to help, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Sir Oliver S. Kind Sir, your most obedient humble servant.

Joseph S. You leave me deeply sorry, Mr. Stanley, William, open the door for the gentleman.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

Joseph S. Your very obedient servant.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, your most servile relation.

Joseph S. You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of help to you.

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Sir Oliver S. Sweet sir, you are too good !

Joseph S. In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

Sir Oliver S. Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

Joseph S. Sir, yours as sincerely.

Sir Oliver S. Charles, you are my heir ! [*Aside. Exit.*

Joseph S. This is one bad effect of a good character ; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities ; whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. Mr. Surface, your servant : I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you.

Joseph S. Always happy to see Mr. Rowley. [*Reads the letter.*] —Sir Oliver Surface !—My uncle arrived !

Rowley. He is, indeed : we have just parted—quite well, after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

Joseph S. I am astonished !—William ! stop Mr. Stanley, if he's not gone.

Rowley. Oh ! he's out of reach, I believe.

Joseph S. Why did you not let me know this when you came in together ?

Rowley. I thought you had particular business ;—but I must be gone to inform your brother, and appoint him here to meet your uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

Joseph S. So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming.——Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky.

[*Aside.*

Rowley. You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

Joseph S. Ah ! I'm rejoiced to hear it——Just at this time !

[*Aside.*

Rowley. I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

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Sir Oliver S. Sweet sir, you are too good !

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Sir Oliver S. Your ever grateful and ever humble servant.

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Rowley. You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

Joseph S. Ah ! I'm rejoiced to hear it—Just at this time ! [*Aside.*

Rowley. I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

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Joseph S. Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing him.—[*Exit Rowley.*]—Certainly his coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill-fortune! [*Exit.*

Scene II—Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Mrs. Candour and Maid

Maid. Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

Mrs. Can. Did you tell her it was her friend Mrs. Candour?

Maid. Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will excuse her.

Mrs. Can. Do go again,—I shall be glad to see her, if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great distress. [*Exit Maid.*] Dear heart, how provoking! I'm not mistress of half the circumstances! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of the parties at length, before I have dropped the story at a dozen houses.

Enter Sir Benjamin Backbite

Oh, Sir Benjamin! you have heard, I suppose——

Sir Benj. B. Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface——

Mrs. Can. And Sir Peter's discovery——

Sir Benj. B. Oh! the strangest piece of business, to be sure!

Mrs. Can. Well, I never was so surprised in my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed.

Sir Benj. B. Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all: he was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Surface.

Mrs. Can. Mr. Surface! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

Sir Benj. B. No, no, I tell you—Mr. Surface is the gallant.

Mrs. Can. No such thing! Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

Sir Benj. B. I tell you I had it from one——

Mrs. Can. And I have it from one——

Sir Benj. B. Who had it from one, who had it——

Mrs. Can. From one immediately——but here comes Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

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Joseph S. Do, do ; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the joyous sentiment I feel at the thought of seeing him—[*Exit Rowley.*]—Certainly his coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill fortune ! [*Exit.*

Scene II—Sir Peter Teazle's

Enter Mrs. Candour and Maid

Maid. Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

Mrs. Can Did you tell her it was her friend Mrs. Candour.

Maid. Yes, ma'am ; but she begs you will excuse her.

Mrs. Can. Do go again,—I shall be glad to see her, if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great difficulty [*Exit Maid.*] Dear heart, how provoking ! I'm not mistress of half the circumstances ! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of the parties at length, before I have told the story at a dozen houses.

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Oh, Sir Benjamin ! you have heard, I suppose—

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Mrs. Can. And Sir Peter's discovery——

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Mrs. Can. Well, I never was so surprised in my life, I am so sorry for all parties concerned.

Sir Benj. B. Now I don't pity Sir Peter at all : he was so exceedingly partial to Mr. Surface.

Mrs. Can. Mr. Surface ! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was discovered.

Sir Benj. B. No, no, I tell you—Mr. Surface is the lover.

Mrs. Can. No such thing ! Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr. Surface who brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

Sir Benj. B. I tell you I had it from one—

Mrs. Can. And I have it from one—

Sir Benj. B. Who had it from one, who had it—

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Enter Lady Sneerwell

Lady Sneer. So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle.

Mrs. Can. Ay, my dear friend, who would have thought——

Lady Sneer. Well, there is no trusting appearances; though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.

Mrs. Can. To be sure, her manners were a little too free: but then she was so young!

Lady Sneer. And had, indeed, some good qualities.

Mrs. Can. So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars?

Lady Sneer. No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface——

Sir Benj. B. Ay, there; I told you Mr. Surface was the man.

Mrs. Can. No, no: indeed the assignation was with Charles.

Lady Sneer. With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs. Candour!

Mrs. Can. Yes, yes, he was the lover. Mr. Surface, to do him justice, was only the informer.

Sir Benj. B. Well, I'll not dispute with you, Mrs. Candour; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not——

Mrs. Can. Sir Peter's wound! Oh, mercy! I didn't hear a word of their fighting.

Lady Sneer. Nor I, a syllable.

Sir Benj. B. No! what, no mention of the duel?

Mrs. Can. Not a word.

Sir Benj. B. Oh, yes: they fought before they left the room.

Lady Sneer. Pray, let us hear.

Mrs. Can. Ay, do oblige us with the duel.

Sir Benj. B. "Sir," says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, "you are a most ungrateful fellow".

Mrs. Can. Ay, to Charles——

Sir Benj. B. No, no—to Mr. Surface—"a most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir," says he, "I insist on immediate satisfaction".

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Enter Lady Sneerwell

Lady Sneer. So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle.

Mrs. Can. Yes, my dear friend, who would have thought——

Lady Sneer. Well, there is no trusting appearances ; though, indeed, she was always too full of life.

Mrs. Can. To be sure, her manners were a little too free : but then she was so young !

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Mrs. Can. Ay, that must have been to Charles ; for 'tis very unlikely Mr. Surface should fight in his own house.

Sir Benj. B. Gad's life, ma'am, not at all—"Giving me immediate satisfaction". On this, ma'am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water ; then, madam, they began to fight with swords——

Enter Crabtree

Crabt. With pistols, nephew—pistols : I have it from undoubted authority.

Mrs. Can. Oh, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true !

Crabt. Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded—

Sir Benj. B. By a thrust in *segoon* quite through his left side—

Crabt. By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

Mrs. Can. Mercy on me ! Poor Sir Peter !

Crabt. Yes, madam ; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

Mrs. Can. I knew Charles was the person.

Sir Benj. B. My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

Crabt. But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude.

Sir Benj. B. That I told you, you know—

Crabt. Do, nephew, let me speak ! and insisted on immediate—

Sir Benj. B. Just as I said—

Crabt. Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too. A pair of pistols lay on the bureau [for Mr. Surface, it seems, had come home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to see the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton], so, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

Sir Benj. B. I heard nothing of this.

Crabt. Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took effect, as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed ; but what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Shakespeare that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

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Sir Benj. B. I heard nothing of this.

Crabt. Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, almost together. Charles's shot hit the target, as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed ; but what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Shakespeare that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the window, at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

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Sir Benj. B. My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I confess ; but I believe mine is the true one for all that.

Lady Sneer. I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information.

[*Aside. Exit Lady Sneerwell.*

Sir Benj. B. Ah ! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

Crabt. Yes, yes, they certainly do say—but that's neither here nor there.

Mrs. Can. But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present ?

Crabt. Oh ! they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny him.

Mrs. Can. I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

Crabt. Yes, yes ; and I saw one of the faculty enter just before me.

Sir Benj. B. Hey ! who comes here ?

Crabt. Oh, this is he : the physician, depend on't.

Mrs. Can. Oh, certainly : it must be the physician ; and now we shall know.

Enter Sir Oliver Surface

Crabt. Well, doctor, what hopes ?

Mrs. Can. Ay, doctor, how's your patient ?

Sir Benj. B. Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small sword ?

Crabt. A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred.

Sir Oliver S. Doctor ! a wound with a small sword ! and a bullet in the thorax ! Oons ! are you mad, good people ?

Sir Benj. B. Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor ?

Sir Oliver S. Truly, I am to thank you for my degree if I am.

Crabt. Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident ?

Sir Oliver S. Not a word !

Crabt. Not of his being dangerously wounded ?

Sir Oliver S. The devil he is !

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Sir Benj. B. My uncle's account is more detailed with facts, I confess ; but I believe mine is the true one for all that.

Lady Sneer. I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information.

[*Aside. Exit Lady Sneerwell.*

Sir Benj. B. Ah ! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily understandable.

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Crabt. Well doctor, what hopes ?

Mrs. Can. Yes doctor, how's your patient ?

Sir Benj. B. Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small sword ?

Crabt. A bullet lodged in the trunk, I bet.

Sir Oliver S. Doctor ! a wound with a samll sword ! and a bullet in the trunk ! Oons ! are you mad, good people ?

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Sir Benj. B. Run through the body——

Crabt. Shot in the breast——

Sir Benj. B. By one Mr. Surface——

Crabt. Ay, the younger.

Sir Oliver S. Hey! what the plague! you seem to differ strangely in your accounts: however, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

Sir Benj. B. Oh, yes, we agree there.

Crabt. Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

Sir Oliver S. Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation, he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was the matter.

Enter Sir Peter Teazle

Odds heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you; for we had just given you over.

Sir Benj. B. Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

Sir Oliver S. Why, man, what do you out of bed with a small sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

Sir Peter T. A small sword, and a bullet!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, these gentlemen would have killed you without law, or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

Sir Peter T. Why, what is all this?

Sir Benj. B. We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.

Sir Peter T. So, so; all over the town already. [*Aside.*

Crabt. Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at your years.

Sir Peter T. Sir, what business is that of yours?

Mrs. Can. Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied.

Sir Peter T. Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.

Sir Benj. B. However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion.

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Enter Sir Peter Teazle

Odds heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you ; for we had just given you over as wounded.

Sir Benj. B. Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery from the wound !

Sir Oliver S. Why, man, why do you come out of bed with a small sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your trunk ?

Sir Peter T. A small sword, and a bullet !

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Sir Peter T. Sir, sir, I desire to be master in my own house.

Crabt. 'Tis no uncommon case, that's one comfort.

Sir Peter T. I insist on being left to myself: without ceremony —I insist on your leaving my house directly.

Mrs. Can. Well, well, we are going, and depend on't we'll make the best report of it we can. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

Crabt. And tell how hardly you've been treated. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

Sir Benj. B. And how patiently you bear it. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Fiends! vipers! furies! Oh! that their own venom would choke them!

Sir Oliver S. They are very provoking, indeed, Sir Peter.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. I heard high words: what has ruffled you, sir?

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?

Rowley. Well, I'm not inquisitive.

Sir Oliver S. Well, Sir Peter, I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.

Sir Peter T. A precious couple they are!

Rowley. Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment is right, Sir Peter.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.

Rowley. Ay, as Sir Peter says, he is a man of sentiment.

Sir Oliver S. And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

Rowley. It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age! ——But how's this, Sir Peter? you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise, as I expected.

Sir Peter T. Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

Rowley. What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

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Sir Peter T. Sir, sir, I desire to be master in my own house.

Crabt. 'Tis no common case, that's a great comfort.

Sir Peter T. I insist on being left to myself: without ceremony—I insist on your leaving my house directly.

Mrs. Can. Well, well, we are going, and depend on't we'll make the best report of it we can. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

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Sir Peter T. Fiends! snakes! furies! Oh! that their own poison would choke them.

Sir Oliver S. They are very provoking, indeed, Sir Peter.

Enter Rowley

Rowley. I heard very provocative words: what has disturbed sir?

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! what does it matter asking? Do I ever pass a day without my irritations?

Rowley. Well, I'm not curious.

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Sir Peter T. Pshaw ! Plague on you both ! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you !

Rowley. Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's, so humbled, that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with you.

Sir Peter T. And does Sir Oliver know all this ?

Sir Oliver S. Every circumstance.

Sir Peter T. What, of the closet and the screen, hey ?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

Sir Peter T. 'Twas very pleasant.

Sir Oliver S. I never laughed more in my life, I assure you : ha ! ha ! ha !

Sir Peter T. Oh, vastly diverting ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

Rowley. To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments : ha ! ha ! ha !

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, his sentiments ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! Hypocritical villain !

Sir Oliver S. Ay, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the closet : ha ! ha ! ha !

Sir Peter T. Ha ! ha ! 'twas devilish entertaining, to be sure !

Sir Oliver S. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down : ha ! ha !

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, my face when the screen was thrown down : ha ! ha ! ha ! Oh, I must never show my head again !

Sir Oliver S. But come, come, it isn't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend ; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

Sir Peter T. Oh, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account : it does not hurt me at all ! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation. Oh, yes, and then of a morning to read the paragraphs about Mr. S——, Lady T——, and Sir P——, will be so entertaining !

Rowley. Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools : but I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room ; I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

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Sir Peter T. Pshaw ! Plague on you both ! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair, I shall go mad among you !

Rowley. Then, to irritate you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's, so humbled that she was obliged to request me to speak for her to you.

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Sir Oliver S. Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you ; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's, where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

Sir Peter T. Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart ; though 'tis a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

Rowley. We'll follow. [*Exit Sir Oliver.*

Sir Peter T. She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

Rowley. No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears.

Sir Peter T. Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little ?

Rowley. Oh, this is ungenerous of you !

Sir Peter T. Well, I know not what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers evidently intended for Charles ?

Rowley. A mere forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose, This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction on.

Sir Peter T. I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has ! Rowley, I'll go to her.

Rowley. Certainly.

Sir Peter T. Though when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

Rowley. Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

Sir Peter T. I'faith, so I will ! and, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

Rowley. Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion——

Sir Peter T. Hold, Master Rowley ! if you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment : I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.—The Library

Enter Joseph Surface and Lady Sneerwell

Lady Sneer. Impossible ! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of course no longer oppose his union with Maria ? The thought is distraction to me.

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Sir Oliver S. Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to act between you ; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

Sir Peter T. Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart ; though 'tis a hall of a unlucky place for discoveries.

Rowley. We'll follow. [*Exit Sir Oliver.*

Sir Peter T. She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

Rowley. No, but she has left the door of that room open, you can see. See, she is in tears.

Sir Peter T. Certainly a little Sadness appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her repeat a little ?

Rowley. Oh, this is very bad of you !

Sir Peter T. Well, I do not know what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers evidently intended for Charles.

Rowley. A mere forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the point which I intend Snake shall give you proof on.

Sir Peter T. I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkable elegant turn of the head she has ! Rowley, I'll go to her.

Rowley. Certainly.

Sir Peter T. Though when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

Rowley. Let them laugh, and answer, their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of their efforts.

Sir Peter T. I'faith so I will ! and, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

Rowley. Well, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion—

Sir Peter T. Hold, master Rowley ! if you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like moral : I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III—The Library

Enter Joseph Surface and Lady Sneerwell

Lady Sneer. Impossible ! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of course no longer oppose his union with Maria ? The thought makes me mad.

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Joseph S. Can passion furnish a remedy ?

Lady Sneer. No, nor cunning neither. Oh ! I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer !

Joseph S. Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer ; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

Lady Sneer. Because the disappointment doesn't reach your heart ; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

Joseph S. But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment ?

Lady Sneer. Are you not the cause of it ? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother, but you must endeavour to seduce his wife ? I hate such an avarice of crimes ; 'tis an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

Joseph S. Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.

Lady Sneer. No !

Joseph S. You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us.

Lady Sneer. I do believe so.

Joseph S. And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove, that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support.

Lady Sneer. This, indeed, might have assisted.

Joseph S. Come, come ; it is not too late yet. [*Knocking at the door.*] But hark ! this is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver : retire to that room ; we'll consult further when he is gone.

Lady Sneer. Well, but if *he* should find you out too ?

Joseph S. Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own credit's sake—and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak side !

Lady S. I have no diffidence of your abilities ! only be constant to one roguery at a time. [*Exit Lady Sneer.*

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Joseph S. Can passion show me a way out ?

Lady Sneer. No, nor cunning neither. Oh ! I was a fool, an idiot, to associate with such a blunderer !

Joseph S. Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer ; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

Lady Sneer. Because the disappointment doesn't reach your heart ; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful rogue, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your anger.

Joseph S. But why should your anger fall on me for this disappointment ?

Lady Sneer. Are you not the cause of it ? Had you not a sufficient scope for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother, but you must try to seduce his wife ? I hate such an avarice of crimes ; 'tis an unfair business, and never prospers.

Joseph S. Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I acted unwisely by doing the wrong thing, but I don't think we're so totally defeated to think that everything is best.

Lady Sneer. Don't you ?

Joseph S. You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us.

Lady Sneer. I do believe so.

Joseph S. And that he has undertaken, if it becomes necessary, to swear and prove, that Charles is at this time engaged by vows and honour to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to prove.

Lady Sneer. This, indeed, might have helped to some extent.

Joseph S. Come, come ; it is not too late yet. [*Knocking at the door.*] But listen ! this is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver : go to that room ; we'll consult further when he is gone.

Lady Sneer. Well, but if he should find you out too ?

Joseph S. Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own homages sake—and you may depend on it I shall soon tell him of Sir Oliver's weak side !

Lady Sneer. I have no distrust of your abilities ! only be constant to one roguery at a time. [*Exit Lady Sneerwell.*

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Joseph S. I will, I will, So ! 'tis confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events my character is so much better than Charles's, that I certainly ——hey !—what !—this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on't that he should return to tease me just now—I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here—and—

Enter Sir Oliver Surface

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time ? You must not stay now, upon my word.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I'll try what he'll do for me.

Joseph S. Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg——Come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted.

Sir Oliver S. No : Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

Joseph S. Zounds, sir ! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

Sir Oliver S. Nay, sir——

Joseph S. Sir, I insist on't : here, William ! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment—this is such insolence ! [*Going to push him out.*

Enter Charles Surface

Charles S. Hey day ! what's the matter now ? What the devil, have you got hold of my little broker here ? Zounds, brother ! don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow ?

Joseph S. So ! he has been with you too, has he ?

Charles S. To be sure he has. Why he's as honest a little—— But sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you ?

Joseph S. Borrowing ! no ! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every——

Charles S. O Gad, that's true ! Noll mustn't find the little broker here, to be sure.

Joseph S. Yet Mr. Stanley insists——

Charles S. Stanley ! why his name's Premium.

Joseph S. No, sir, Stanley.

Charles S. No, no, Premium.

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Joseph S. I will, I will. So ! 'tis extremely hard, after such bad fortune, to be cheated by one's accomplices in evil. Well, at all events my character is so much better than Charles's, that I certainly —hey !—what !—this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on 'it that he should return to tease me just now—I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here—and—

Enter Sir Oliver Surface

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time ? You must not stay now, upon my word.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so miserly to you, I'll try and try what he does for me.

Joseph S. Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must be——come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be helped.

Sir Oliver S. No : Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

Joseph S. Zounds, sir ! then I insist on your leaving my house immediately.

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir——

Joseph S. Sir, I insist on't : here, William ! Show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment—this is such insolence ! [*Going to push him out.*

Enter Charles Surface

Charles S. Hey day ! What's the matter now ? What the devil, have you got hold of my little broker here ? Zounds, brother ! don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow ?

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Joseph S. Borrowing ! no ! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every——

Charles S. O Gad, that's true ! Noll mustn't find the little broker here, certainly.

Joseph S. Yet Mr. Stanley insists——

Charles S. Stanley ! why his name's Premium.

Joseph S. No, Sir, Stanley.

Charles S. No, no, Premium.

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Joseph S. Well, no matter which—but——

Charles S. Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing, as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A. B. at the coffee-house. [*Knocking.*

Joseph S. 'Sdeath! here's Sir Oliver at the door. Now I beg, Mr. Stanley——

Charles S. Ay, ay, and I beg, Mr. Premium——

Sir Oliver S. Gentlemen——

Joseph S. Sir, by heaven you shall go!

Charles S. Ay, out with him, certainly!

Sir Oliver S. This violence——

Joseph S. Sir, 'tis your own fault.

Charles S. Out with him to be sure.

[*Both forcing Sir Oliver out.*

Enter Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, Maria, and Rowley

Sir Peter T. My old friend, Sir Oliver—hey! What in the name of wonder—here are dutiful nephews—assault their uncle at a first visit!

Lady T. Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to rescue you.

Rowley. Truly, it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was no protection to you.

Sir Oliver S. Nor of Premium either: the necessities of the former could not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman; and now, egad, I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors, and being knocked down without being bid for.

Joseph S. Charles!

Charles S. Joseph!

Joseph S. 'Tis now complete!

Charles S. Very!

Sir Oliver S. Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too—look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him: judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of faith, charity, and gratitude.

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Joseph S. Well, no matter which——but——

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[*Knocking.*

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Charles S. Well, well, and I beg, Mr. Premium—

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Joseph S. Charles !

Charles S. Joseph !

Joseph S. 'Tis now complete !

Charles S. Very much !

Sir Oliver S. Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too—look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my generosity ; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune given trust to him : Judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be award of faith, charity, and gratitude.

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Sir Peter T. Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration, if I had not myself found him to be mean, treacherous, and hypocritical.

Lady T. And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call *me* to his character.

Sir Peter T. Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment, that he is known to the world.

Charles S. If they talk this way to Honesty, what will they say to *me*, by and by? [*Aside.*

Sir Oliver S. As for that prodigal, his brother, there—

Charles S. Ay, now comes my turn: the damned family pictures will ruin me. [*Aside.*

Joseph S. Sir Oliver—uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?

Charles S. Now if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely? [*To Joseph.*

Joseph S. I trust I could.

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir!—and you could justify yourself too, I suppose?

Charles S. Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver S. What!—Little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I suppose?

Charles S. True, sir; but they were *family* secrets, and should not be mentioned again, you know.

Rowley. Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.

Sir Oliver S. Odds heart, no more I can; nor with gravity either.——Sir Peter, do you know, the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors; sold me judges and generals by the foot, and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china.

Charles S. To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas, that's the truth on't. My ancestors may rise in judgment against me, there's no denying it; but believe me sincere when I tell you—and upon my soul I would not say so if I was not—that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my liberal benefactor.

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Sir Oliver S. Charles, I believe you ; give me your hand again : the ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace.

Charles S. Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.

Lady T. Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, I have heard of his attachment there ; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right—that blush—

Sir Peter T. Well, child, speak your sentiments !

Maria. Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy ; for me—whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign to one who has a better title.

Charles S. How, Maria !

Sir Peter T. Hey day ! what's the mystery now ?—While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else ; and now that he is likely to reform, I'll warrant you won't have him.

Maria. His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

Charles S. Lady Sneerwell !

Joseph S. Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed. [*Opens the door.*

Enter Lady Sneerwell

Sir Peter T. So ! another French milliner ! Egad, he has one in every room in the house, I suppose.

Lady Sneer. Ungrateful Charles ! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.

Charles S. Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours ? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

Joseph S. I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

Sir Peter T. And that person, I imagine, is Mr. Snake.—Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

Rowley. Walk in, Mr. Snake.

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Sir Oliver S. Charles, I believe you ; give me your hand again : the ill looking little fellow over the settee has no complaint against you.

Charles S. Then, Sir, my gratitude to my benefactor has all the more increased.

Lady T. Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, I have heard of his attachment there ; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I judge right—that blush——

Sir Peter T. Well, child, speak of your attachment :

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Charles. S. How, Maria !

Sir Peter T. Hey day ! what's the mystery now ?—While he appeared an incorrigible rogue, you would give your hand to no one else ; and now that he is likely to reform, I find you won't have him.

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Enter Snake

I thought his testimony might be wanted : however, it happens unluckily, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to support her.

Lady Sneer. A villain ! Treacherous to me at last !—Speak, fellow ; have you too conspired against me ?

Snake. I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons : you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question ; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

Sir Peter T. Plot and counter-plot, egad !

Lady Sneer. The torments of shame and disappointment on you all.—

Lady T. Hold, Lady Sneerwell,—before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken, in writing letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself ; and let me also request you to make my respects to the scandalous college, of which you are president, and inform them that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they gave her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.

Lady Sneer. You too, madam—provoking—insolent—May your husband live these fifty years ! [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Oons ! what a fury !

Lady T. A malicious creature, indeed !

Sir Peter T. Hey ! Not for her last wish ?

Lady T. Oh, no !

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir, and what have you to say now ?

Joseph S. Sir, I am so confounded, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say : however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Moral to the last drop !

Sir Oliver S. Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can.—Oil and Vinegar, egad ! you'll do very well together.

Rowley. I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present ?

Snake. Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

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Enter Snake

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Lady Sneer. You too, madam—provoking—insolent—May your husband live these fifty years to torment you ! [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Oons ! what a fury !

Lady T. A most wicked creature, indeed !

Sir Peter T. Hey ! Not for her last wish ?

Lady T. Oh, no !

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir, and what have you to say now ?

Joseph S. Sir, I am so confused, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty inducing by briefs to bear false witness Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say : however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. A typical moralist to the last drop !

Sir Oliver S. Yes, and marry her, Joseph, if you can.—Oil and Vinegar, egad ! You'll do very well together.

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Snake. But I must request of the company, that it shall never be known.

Sir Peter T. Hey !—What the plague !—Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life ?

Snake. Ah, sir ! consider,—I live by the badness of my character ; I have nothing but my infamy to depend on ! and if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well,—we'll not traduce you by saying anything in your praise, never fear. [*Exit Snake.*

Sir Peter T. There's a precious rogue !

Lady T. See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, ay, that's as it should be, and egad, we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

Charles S. Thank you, dear uncle !

Sir Peter T. What, you rogue ! don't you ask the girl's consent first ?

Charles S. Oh, I have done that a long time—a minute ago—and she has looked *yes*.

Maria. For shame, Charles !—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word.

Sir Oliver S. Well, then, the fewer the better ;—may your love for each other never know abatement !

Sir Peter T. And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I—intend to do !

Charles S. Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me ; and I suspect that I owe you much.

Sir Oliver S. You do indeed, Charles.

Rowley. If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt ; but deserve to be happy, and you overpay me.

Sir Peter T. Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

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Snake. Ah, sir ! consider,—I live by the badness of my character ; I have nothing but my infamy to depend on ! and if it were once known that I had been compelled an honest thing, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well,—we'll not slander you by saying anything in your praise, never fear. [*Exit Snake.*

Sir Peter T. There's wonderful rogue !

Lady T. See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, that's as it should be, and egad, we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

Charles S. Thank you, dear uncle !

Sir Peter T. What, you rogue ! don't you ask the girl's consent first ?

Charles S. Oh, I have done that a long time—a minute ago ——and she has looked yes.

Maria. For shame, Charles !—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been any quarrel.

Sir Oliver S. Well, then, the fewer the better ;—may your love for each other never know any such thing !

Sir Peter T. And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I—intend to do !

Charles S. Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me ; and I suspect that I owe you much.

Sir Oliver S. You do indeed, Charles.

Rowley. If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt ; but you deserve to be happy, and I am extremely happy about it.

Sir Peter T. Yes, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

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Charles S. Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it; but here shall be my monitor—my gentle guide—ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst waive thy beauty's sway,
Thou still must rule, because I will obey:
A humble fugitive from Folly view,
No sanctuary near but Love and you;

[*To the audience.*

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,
For even Scandal dies if you approve.

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Charles S. Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that let me tell you that I will try not to do anything wrong ; and here shall be my counseller—my gentle guide—ah ! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes guide me to ?

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst waive thy beauty's sway,

Thou still must rule, because I will obey :

A humble fugitive from Folly view,

No sanctuary near but Love and you ;

[*To the audience.*

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,

For even Scandal dies if you approve.

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EPILOGUE

BY MR. COLMAN

Spoken by Lady Teazle

(Text)

I, who was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock—my spouse !
So wills our virtuous bard—the motley Bayes
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays !
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives :
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her—
London will prove the very source of honour.
Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax, to brace the nerves :
Such is my case ; and yet I must deplore
That the gay dream of dissipation's o'er.
And say, ye fair, was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me untimely blasted in her bloom,
Like me condemned to such a dismal doom ?
Save money—when I just knew how to waste it !
Leave London—just as I began to taste it !
Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
The melancholy ticking of a clock ;
In a lone rustic hall for ever pounded,
With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded ?
With humble curate can I now retire,
(While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire),
And at backgammon mortify my soul,
That pants for loo, or flutters at a vole ?

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EPILOGUE

BY MR. COLMAN

Spoken by Lady Teazle

(Complete Paraphrase)

I, who was late so lively and gay,
Like a trade wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my craft and my promises,
To one dull rusty weathercock—my spouse !
So will our virtuous a dramatic—the manyside dramatist
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays !
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives :
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her—
London will prove the very source of honour.
Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax, to brace the nerves ;
Such is my case ; and yet I must condemn
That the gay dream of dissolute life is over.
And, say you fair, was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me untimely dead in her bloom,
Like me condemned to such a sad end ?
Save money—When I just knew how to waste it !
Leave London—just as I began to taste it !
Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
The melancholy ticking of a clock ;
In a lone rustic hall for ever confirmed,
With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded ?
With humble curate can I now retire,
(While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire),
And at indoor games mortify my soul,
That is eager for card-game, or flutters at a winning hand ?

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Seven's the main ! Dear sound that must expire,
Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire !
The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content !
Farewell the plumed head, the cushion'd tete,
That takes the cushion from its proper seat !
The spirit-stirring drum ! card drums I mean,
Spadille—odd trick—pam—basto—king and queen !
And you, ye knockers, that, with brazen throat,
The welcome visitors' approach denote ;
Farewell all quality of high renown,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious Town !
Farewell ! your revels I partake no more,
And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er !
All this I told our bard ; he smiled, and said 'twas clear,
I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
And in these solemn periods stalk'd away :
"Blest were the fair like you ; her faults who stopt,
And closed her follies when the curtain dropt !
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage".

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Seven's the number ! Dear sound that must die,
Lost at children's games round a Christmas fire !
The ever flitting hour of fashion too soon spent,
Farewell the peace for mind, farewell happiness !
Farewell the feathered head and the padded head-dress,
That takes the cushion from its proper seat.
The spirit-stirring drum ! the evening party I mean,
The ace of spades—odd trick—knave of clubs—king and queen
And you, ye knockers, that, with brass throat,
The welcome visitors' approach denote ;
Farewell all quality of high renown,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious Town !
Farewell ! your revels I partake no more.
And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er !
All this I told our poet ; he smiled, and said 'twas clear,
I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
And in these solemn sentences walked away :
"Blest were the women like you ; her faults who stopped,
And closed her follies when the curtain dropt !
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool extravagantly on life's great stage".

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Annotations

A PORTRAIT

Mrs. Crewe : One of the most beautiful women of her time ; among her friends were Sheridan and Burke. Reynolds painted three portraits of her. Her husband later became Lord Crewe.

Rail...rule : *i.e.* abuse and slander people according to set rules.

Approve by envy : *i.e.* prove her excellent by envying her.

Fond creation : *i.e.* foolish image created by the imagination of a poet and lover.

Worthier verse : The statesman Charles James Fox wrote some verses upon her in 1775, but Sheridan probably refers to a poem by his own wife.

But thee : *i.e.* without you.

Reynolds : Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), one of the greatest English portrait-painters.

Granby : Sheridan is referring to paintings by Reynolds of the Marchioness of Granby and the Duchess of Devonshire.

State : *i.e.* affected stateliness.

Moving love : *i.e.* Love which inspires tender feelings.

Seest thou not, etc. : *i.e.* do you not realise that a Cupid, lying in ambush, too fearful of what is entrusted to his charge, with anxious care opens and closes her eyes, the heavenly light of which would otherwise be too strong for men to gaze on ?

Fond to meet : *i.e.* foolishly willing and ready to encounter the vengeance of those delightful eyes.

Prerogative in her : *i.e.* to be belonging to her by right, her just privilege.

Greville : Mrs. Crewe's mother, wife of Fulke Greville, a diplomat.

In Millar's dialect etc. : *i.e.* the high flown phrasing favoured by Mrs. Miller, a fashionable hostess at Bath.

Submitted : Low.

Just to : In justice to, with the respect due to.

Envious train : *i.e.* assembly of envious people.

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PROLOGUE

Garrick : David Garrick (1717-79) was one of the greatest English actors and theatrical managers. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Modish : Fashionable.

Vapours : low spirits, depression.

Hit : cure.

Quantum sufficit : As much as suffices.

Sal volatile : Ammonium carbonate in solution, used for headaches and fainting fits.

Poz : A colloquial abbreviation of positively.

Our Young Don Quixote : Sheridan. Don Quixote is the idealistic, chivalrous and unselfish, but ridiculous hero of the famous Spanish novel of that name by Cervantes (1547-1616).

Hydra : A snake in Greek mythology with a hundred heads ; as soon as one head was cut off, two grew in its place unless the wound was stopped by fire.

Cavalliero : chivalrous knight.

ACT I

Scene I

Drinking chocolate : Chocolate was a very fashionable drink in the eighteenth century. It was introduced from the West Indies to Spain, and thence spread to France and England, where from about 1660 it rivalled coffee in the coffee-houses.

All inserted : in the newspaper.

Feigned hand : disguised handwriting.

In as fine a train : proceeding as satisfactorily.

Mrs. Clackitt's : named from clack, to chatter.

Matches : engagements (to marry).

Forced elopements : to put an end to scandal-mongering.

Close confinements : by parents to prevent elopements.

Separate maintenances : separations by agreements, under which the husband supports his wife financially.

Tete-a-tete : Short topical biographies with portraits. French ; "head-to-head".

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Town and Country Magazine : An actual periodical from 1769 to 1792 ; it was then running a series of *tete-a-tetes*.

Gross : lacking in refinement ; not in the modern sense of extreme coarseness.

Designs : conceives the general idea or plan. The metaphor from sketching is followed up in the terms colouring and outlines.

Partial : Prejudied in favour of me.

A City knight : a merchant of the City of London, knighted probably for civic services, *e.g.*, as alderman.

Jointure : property settled on a woman at her marriage to become hers upon her husband's death.

Close with the passion : accept his love and arrange a marriage settlement.

Mask his pretensions : conceal the fact that his aim is to marry Maria.

Libertine : A man given to immoral love affairs.

A man of sentiment : An ironical term in scorn of the popular taste for heroes whose "genteel" virtues gave a sentimental, improving tone to comedies. Miss Hardcastle in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* uses the phrase similarly.

Brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest : won over Sir Peter's support.

Most obedient : servant ; a formal style of address.

Rallying : refined taste and feelings ; a sense common in the eighteenth century.

Distress : inconveniences due to debt. In law distress is the seizure of goods in payment of an unpaid debt.

Execution : of a warrant to remove goods to pay off a debt.

Egad : A polite softening of "Ah God" as an exclamation.

Lud : from "Lord".

Reclaimed : converted to virtuous living.

Understanding : intelligence, intellect.

Backbite : one who slanders people behind their backs.

Crabtree : one crabbed and sour like a crab-apple.

A principal : In law one who commits or is an abettor of a crime.

Traduce : slander.

Gross affectation : Conspicuous display, obvious assumption.

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This century : A common phrase : "I haven't seen you for years".

Filigree Flirt : He is so called to suggest an over-dressed dandy, filigree is delicate ornamental work of gold and silver wire.

No minding : no attention to be paid to.

York diligence : mail-coach bound for York.

Festino's...Cassino : Named after *festino* (Italian). used of an entertainment in Sheridan's day, and *cassino*, card game.

Licence of invention : the freedom with which some take it upon themselves to invent stories about others.

Culpable : To be blamed.

Dropsy : A diseased condition characterised by a swelling due to the accumulation of watery fluid.

Buffalo : So called to suggest a man of strong temper and powerful, ungainly build.

Quinze...Nickit : Names chosen to suggest the way their money was lost ; *quinze* (Fr. fifteen) was a card game, *nick* a winning throw at dice.

All up : all ruined.

Rebus : A kind of riddle, in which a pun is made on each syllable of a word or words.

Charade : A kind of riddle in which each syllable of a word is represented by a description.

Lady Frizzle : A frizzle was a small crisp curl.

Extempore : On the spur of the moment.

Conversazione : A fashionable gathering for literary talk ; an Italian word.

Lampoons : Scurrilous satires on individuals.

Love elegies : mournful love poems.

Petrarch : Francesco Petrarca (1304-74) wrote Italian sonnets in honour of Laura ; they greatly influenced the French sonneteers of the sixteenth century, and, through them, the Elizabethan poets.

Waller : Edmund Waller, (1606-87) as a widower paid poetic court to one "Sacharissa," said to have been Lady Dorothy Sidney. The eighteenth century esteemed him as the poet who, with Denham, introduced the "correct" style of poetry followed by Dryden and perfected by Pope. We remember only a lyric or two of his, such as "Go, lovely rose".

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Quarto : The size of a page made by folding a standard sheet of paper twice so as to make 4 pages ; about 9 in. by 12 in.

Liveries : Here simply "clothes" ; *bespoke* means "ordered in anticipation".

Valetudinarians : Weakly, delicate people.

Tunbridge : The chalybeate springs at Tunbridge Wells in Kent made that town a fashionable spa from the time of Charles II. It reached the height of its popularity in the second half of the eighteenth century, and was visited by Dr. Johnson, Reynolds, and Garrick.

Mrs. Ponto : Named after a term in some card games for the ace of trumps.

Lady Dowager Dundizzy : A dowager is a widow who has inherited a title or wealth from her husband ; we should now say "The dowager Lady D." The dialect sense of *dizzy*, *i.e.* hard of hearing, is meant, and the *dun* is suggested by the real peerage title *Dundreary*.

Farm-house : A house where unwanted babies were "farmed out", *i.e.* entrusted to foster parents paid for their services.

The Jews : the money-lenders, most of whom were Jews.

Old Jewry . Crabtree means the money-lenders rather than this actual street turning north off Cheapside. Though named after its former inhabitants, it was in 1766 "inhabited by gentlemen of great fashion". The City of London is divided into a number of wards, each electing one alderman.

Annuities : Yearly payments of interest.

The Irish tontine : A tontine was a scheme to raise money, by which subscribers to a loan all received an annuity, which, as subscribers died, became larger for the survivors. The last survivor would have the total income. It originated in France as a means of raising government loan.

Officer : a bailiff's man.

Changes colour : blushes.

Penchant : Liking, preference.

Wainscots : Panels covering the walls of a room.

I doubt...engaged : I suspect she is more deeply in love.

Scene II

Tifted : Quarrelled pettishly ; a *tiff*.

Race ball : An entertainment held in connection with a race-meeting.

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Grosvenor Square : The residents in these houses were wealthy and fashionable. Knight's *London* (1844) said : "This square continues to be a favourite residence of the oldest titled families. Grosvenor-square was the last square in London lighted by gas. The aristocratic inhabitants preferred for many years the dim and uncertain light of oil."

Contradicts...humours : opposes or goes against my wishes or inclinations.

I doubt : I suspect that.

Spark : A gay young man of fashion.

Make some trial : To test them so as to find out the kind of characters they have.

ACT II

Scene I

Unmeaning : foolish, senseless.

'Slife : a weakening of "God's life.

The Pantheon : A fashionable place of entertainment opened in Oxford Street in 1772. When Dr. Johnson visited it, he remarked to Boswell : "Sir, there are many happy people here. There are many here who are watching hundreds, and who think hundreds are watching them."

Fete champetre : An entertainment in the open air.

Oons : A polite corruption of "God's wounds".

Tambour : A circular frame to hold material to be enbroidered ; named from its resemblance to the head of a drum (tambour).

Figured : adorned with patterns.

A roll : A round cushion or puff of hair or other material, forming part of a woman's head-dress.

Fruits in worsted : ornamental screens, etc., containing figures of fruits embroidered in fine wool.

Curious : Probably used in the old sense "attentive to detail; painstaking."

Family receipt-book : a book of recipes for dishes, medicines, etc., handed down in the family.

Ruffles : Strips of lace to attach to the wrists or neck of clothes.

Pope Joan : A card game, apparently named after the legendary female Pope Joan.

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Spinet : A stringed musical instrument resembling the harpsichord but smaller.

Vis-a-vis : A light carriage to hold two persons sitting facing one another ; French "face to face".

Powdered : with their wigs powdered.

Chair : the Sedan chair of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was a small closed apartment carried on poles by two men.

White Cats : sleek white horses.

Kensington Gardens : Kensington is a large populous village, but most celebrated for the royal palace, and gardens, three miles and a half in compass.

Dock'd coach-horse : A horse, with its tail cut short, usually employed to draw a coach.

Zounds : An abbreviation of "God's wounds".

Tenacious of reputation : desirous of maintaining their reputations.

Rid on a hurdle : Condemned prisoners were drawn to the place of execution on a kind of sledge (hurdle), 'rid' is for ridden. In the eighteenth century coining, arson, forgery, and many trifling crimes such as to pick a man's pocket of more than 12 pence, were punishable by death. Between 1771 and 1783, 467 persons were executed in London and Middlesex alone.

Clippers : Said in allusion to the illegal custom of clipping pieces off sovereigns to steal the gold.

Bear a part : play her part in the company.

Scene II

Curricle : A curricle was a two-wheeled carriage drawn by two horses.

Taking the dust : A satirical play on "taking the air", because that end would be defeated by the dust raised by the carriage.

Duodecimo : diminutive ; properly the size of a book-page, one-twelfth of a whole sheet.

Phaeton : A light open four-wheeled carriage, generally with two horses, and with one seat facing forwards ; named after the son of Helious, the sun-god, who set heaven and earth on fire when trying to drive his father's chariot.

Macaronies : The name given about 1750 to 1790 to a kind of fashionable dandies who aped foreign fashions.

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Phoebus : A name of Apollo, god of poetry. As sun-god, he was represented as driving a chariot across the heavens ; hence, mounted.

Piquet : A card-game for two, played with a pack of 32 cards.

Ochre : She is named after a yellowish-brown colouring matter.

Caulks : stops up [cracks].

Poor's box : a poor box, as in church, for offerings for the poor.

Dowager : A widow who has inherited a title or wealth from her husband.

Quadrille : Her name is from either a game of cards or a dance.

Small whey : The watery liquid left when the curd is separated from milk ; small means "thin."

Laces herself : The passion for tight lacing was carried so far that lady Crewe once rushed up to her bedroom, calling her maid instantly to cut the laces or she would faint.

The Ring : A circular track in Hyde Park for riding and driving.

Sugar-baker : a sugar-refiner.

Lady Stucco : Stucco was fine plaster used for ornamental ceilings.

French fruit : A kind of imitation fruit *e.g.* Easter-eggs containing small trinkets.

Irish front : Sheridan probably means little precise significance to be given to the terms "Irish forehead, Scotch hair, Chinese teeth," etc. ; it matters little if Austrian lips are full, or a Spanish complexion olive—the humour is "geographical."

Table d'hote : a hotel dining-table.

Spa : A town in Belgium famous for its curative mineral springs ; the name was adopted for such a watering-place in England, e.g. Leamidgton Spa.

Congress : Conference to settle terms of peace.

General war : one in which several countries have been engaged.

A different interest : A purpose of their own.

Join issue : Agree together, an erroneous usage ; the proper sense is to enter upon an argument with someone.

Provoking Toads : An eighteenth-century colloquialism for annoying wretches.

Phlegmatic : Serious, slow-witted.

Law merchant : the laws relating to merchandise or trade applicable to them too.

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Slander currency : slander passing from one to another, like money which is known as currency because it is current, i.e. in circulation.

The Drawer : Sir Peter has in mind that form of paper currency known as a bill of exchange. The drawer of such a bill requests the acceptor to pay on his behalf to a third party a sum named in the bill ; the bill may be assigned to another who will then sign his name on the back (endorse it), and, if the bill is transferred more than once, all the endorsers will be responsible, should the one who ought finally to pay fail to do so.

Bombast : Exaggerated high-flown action and speech.

Cicisbeo : Formerly an Italian term for the formal lover of a married woman. Platonic is in the sense of "platonic love," i.e. love without sensual feelings.

The only revenge...power : Surface means the humiliation of her husband by her taking him as her lover.

My Politics : his schemes to serve his own interests.

Scene III

Stood bluff to : remained firm.

Cross accident : unfortunate event, misfortune.

Allons : "Let's go" ; French.

Odds my life : Either a confused phrase where odds—Gods, a common exclamation ; or, odds—God save.

Out of the course : We would say "off the rails" ; course is in the sense of "track" as in race course.

Green suckers : shoots of a plant or tree, used figuratively of children as drawing support from their parents.

ACT III

Scene I

Jest : A form of gist.

Our immortal bard : Shakespeare. The quotation is from *Henry IV*.

Melting : which is moved by sympathy.

Intelligence : news, information.

Worse than nothing : in debt.

The City : The City of London.

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Premium : He is named after a premium in the sense of interest on a loan.

Crutched Friars : A street near the site of a long dissolved monastery, and lying between Fenchurch Street and the Tower of London.

Broker : Money-lender.

The Principal : One for whom another acts as agent ; *i.e.* Mr. Premium.

Cant of usury : money-lenders' jargon.

Mode of treating : way of doing business.

Unconscionable dog : an unreasonable extortionate fellow.

Stock : investments.

Run out a little against : complain about.

The Annuity Bill : A topical allusion to an Act of Parliament passed in May prohibiting the granting of annuities to minors by money-lenders.

To ruin himself : by borrowing money.

Rapacious gripe of usury : greedy clutch of money-lenders.

Minor : A person not legally of age.

Being undone : being ruined as a result of his being allowed to inherit too young, and so waste his inheritance in youthful folly.

Seal me a bond : set your seal to document binding you to repay me ; probably, in his humour, he means "kiss me."

Note of hand : Properly a written promise to pay a given sum ; a promissory note.

Independent settlement : money settled by a husband on his wife making her financially independent of him.

Gipsy : An eighteenth century abusive epithet for a woman.

Tivy Terrier : He is so named to suggest a huntsman ; tivy is a shortening of the hunting word tantivy (from the note of a hunting-horn).

Broke his neck : in the hunting field ; 'broke' for broken was then common in polite speech.

Scene II

The other's economy : Joseph was a good deal more to be blamed for saving money by selling the house which had been his father's.

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Bags and bouquets : Silk wig bags and nosegays were then necessary for footmen in fashionable families.

Halters and bastinadoes : A scornful comment that hanging and whipping are Trip's deserts.

A propos : To the point, as to (you know what).

Get...bill discounted : obtain cash for the bill of exchange. The money so raised would be the sum named in the bill less discount, i.e. interest calculated on the time to elapse before the day named for payment in the bill.

Affects...duns : out of vanity makes it his aim to be in debt and pestered by duns, men pressing him for payment.

Good lack : An exclamation of surprise. For the use of good (substituted for God), good gracious ; lack is from alack.

Insure your place : insure yourself against the risk of losing your job.

Deposit : as security for the loan.

Capital : of the best quality.

Dropped : Discarded.

Equity of redemption : To mortgage property is to make over the rights in it as security for a loan. If the loan is not repaid in the agreed time, the lender may claim the property, but by equity of redemption the borrower may still, within a certain time regain his property by repayment plus interest. The humour lies in Trip's airing his legal knowledge on the subject of clothes, when the terms apply to immovable property.

Reversion : Properly the right to succeed to an estate.

Post-obit : Properly a bond for a loan to be repaid on the death of one by whose will the borrower expects money ; Latin, meaning "after death".

Point ruffles : Fine lace borders, such as wristband ; point refers to lace worked by needle.

Collateral : additional to the principal security.

Scene III

Mantle : A metaphor from sparkling "head" on a drink.

Flatulence : bubbly, gassy state.

Play : gambling.

Hazard regimen : a diet for gambling.

Abjurer of : One who solemnly renounces.

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She that floats : The girl whose image seems to float before his eyes as he drinks.

Give...of her peers : drink successive toasts to women who are her equals in charm and beauty.

Canonised vestals : Literally maidens who have been declared saints, but the reference is to the Vestal Virgins. A virgin is the priestess of the goddess Vesta at Rome.

Want an eye : be one-eyed ; to be wanting (lacking) in something.

Quean : Bold, forward woman.

Take the chair : act as host.

Generous : A term for rich, full-bodied wine.

Demurred at : hesitated over, taken exception to.

Word, note, or bond : he is ready to pledge himself as security for his friend's loan whether by his word or by putting his name to a note of hand or bond.

Sell stock : realise investments, turn them into cash.

Bough-pots : Ornamental jars, or flower-pots to hold twigs or flowers.

Pointers : dogs used to scent game.

Massy : Heavy.

Race-cups : gold or silver cups given as prizes for horse races.

Corporation-bowls : Bowls given to members of a corporation such as that of a city.

Bowels : Compassion, tenderness ; a Biblical expression.

Shylock : The cruel Jewish money-lender in Shakespeare's, *The Merchant of Venice*. He lent Bassanio money on the security of pound of a flesh to be cut from Bassanio's friend, the merchant.

Have with you : Let's get on with it.

A hammer : the wooden mallet used by an auctioneer to indicate that a lot has been sold.

Going, going : He waves an imaginary hammer, as he uses this auctioneering term.

Appraiser : Valuer of the pictures.

ACT IV

Scene I

The Conquest : The Norman Conquest (1066) : said humorously to suggest great antiquity. Up to means going back as far as."

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Volontier grace : Easy, natural grace.

Modern Raphaels : Sanzio Raphael (1483-1520) was one of the greatest Italian painters. The great English portrait painters of the time of the play were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney.

Inveterate : Strong and lasting.

Gouty : Bulging, like limbs inflamed by gout.

Ex post facto parricide : a retrospective murderer of his ancestors —because he contemplates knocking down their portraits by auction : *ex post facto* in Latin is equivalent to "done subsequently."

Generation : genealogy, ancestors ; a usage common in the Authorised Version of the Bible.

Raveline : The imaginary Sir Richard is named after an outwork of a fortification.

Marlborough : Charles Churchill, created Duke of Marlborough in 1702, was Captain General of the forces during the war with France in Queen Anne's reign. He was one of the greatest English generals, and his victories included the battles of Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706), and Malplaquet (1709).

Clipt : no longer with feathers as part of their military dress.

Kneller : Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) was a famous portrait-painter. A Dutchman by birth, he came to England in 1675 ; his portraits of Charles II, and William III, are famous.

When beaux : The wearing of wigs by gentlemen, begun in England about 1660, began to be given up about 1750. In 1765 the wig-makers petitioned the king to lead the fashion against "the growing custom of gentlemen wearing their own hair."

Head-dresses : Pyramids of false hair worn by women.

Circuit : The towns in a certain area visited in succession by a judge to hold the assizes.

Woolsack : Now used only of the Lord Chancellor's seat in the House of Lords, but then also of the seats of judges summoned to sit in the Lords.

What's very extraordinary : an ironical allusion to the corruption rife in mid-eighteenth-century politics, when the votes of M.P.s were commonly bought and sold.

Draft : Cheque, a bill drawn on the bank ; draft is a noun derived from to draw.

Nabob : The name given to Englishmen who returned from India with wealth gained, often corruptly, in the service of the East

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India Company. Such men were becoming fairly numerous at this time. The word is the Anglicised form of an Indian title—'nawab'.

Splenetic : Peevish, ill-humoured ; affected by splean.

Beldame : ill-natured hag.

Hazard : gambling.

Scene II

Games : gambles.

Necessitous : Poor, needy.

Scene III

Curious : Inquisitive.

Original compact : the marriage vow to "love her, comfort her, honour and keep her."

Frail...discernment : an unfaithful wife, so as to pay her husband the compliment of proving him correct in his suspicions.

Negligent of forms : unconventional.

Faux pas : Slip, false step.

Plethora : In old medicine a state of ill-health supposedly due to an excess of red corpuscles in the blood.

A coxcomb : vain about.

Moment : Importance.

Sensibly chagrined : Considerably hurt, appreciably disappointed; the meaning of sensibly arises from the original use of sensible as perceptible by the senses, able to arouse sensation (feeling).

Trepan : Ensnare.

Joseph : One who rejects the love of women ; the reference is to Joseph's rejection of Potiphar's wife.

Closet : a small recess, or ante-room.

Tax him home : press him closely on the subject of Lady Teazle.

Inquisitor : An official investigator.

Incog. : incognito, unknown, in an assumed character.

Know...too well : Am too well acquainted with his honourable character to suspect him.

Anchorite : One who renounces worldly pleasures ; a hermit.

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Discovering : revealing.

Morality : Said ironically of Joseph.

ACT V

Scene I

Policy : Wisdom, skill in managing affairs.

Speculative : theoretical.

Sensual : Practical as against theoretical ; the meaning arises from the idea of using the senses.

Complaisance : polite appearance of desiring to be agreeable and obliging.

Want...with him : lack one to plead with him on your behalf.

Bullion : Property, gold or silver in bulk, unminted.

Rupees : Indian silver coins then worth 2s. 3d.

Pagodas : Indian gold coins then worth about 8s.

Congou tea : A kind of black tea imported from China.

Avadavats : Pretty little Indian song birds.

Indian Crackers : Crackers (bon-bons) containing Indian sweetmeats.

Obsequious : Dutiful (servant).

Address : Skill.

Scene II

Not mistress...circumstances : not fully acquainted with even half of what happened between Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, and the Surfaces.

Sir Peter's discovery : his being "discovered" (revealed) in the "closet".

Partial to : biased in favour of.

Gallant : Lover ; in this sense generally stressed on the second syllable in pronunciation.

Hartshorn : ammonia, then commonly obtained from the antlers of the hart.

In second : A fencing term.

Thora : : Chest.

Montem : The scholars of Eton used to go in a fancy dress procession to 'Salt Hill', a mound near Slough, and there collected money

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from the bystanders. The money collected was applied to defray the expenses of the senior colleger, the Captain of Montem at King's College, Cambridge. The last celebration was in 1844 ; from Latin admontem, to the hill.

A double letter : A letter written on two sheets and charged double postage.

Circumstantial : detailed.

Deny him : not to admit visitors.

One of the faculty : physician or surgeon.

Small-sword : a light sword used in fencing.

Degree : of Doctor of Medicine

Odds heart : a polite exclamation : *odd*=God's.

Discovering yourself : revealing who you really are.

Scene III

Is distraction to me : disturbs me.

Avarice of crimes : being so greedy as not to be content with one crime.

Diffidence : Distrust, doubt.

Penurious : Niggardly, miserly.

A. B. at the coffee-house : Coffee-houses were very convenient places for money-lenders to meet their clients more or less incognito.

Licentiate : one who holds a diploma.

Suborning : inducing by bribes to bear false witness.

Traduce : Slander.

Monitor : Adviser, counsellor.

Waive...sway : Lay aside the power given her by her beauty.

EPILOGUE

Mr. Colman : George Colman (1732-94) was a leading dramatist of the time, and also manager of Covent Garden Theatre (1767-74), and later of Heymarket Theatre. His comedies include *The Jealous Wife* (1761).

Trade wind : A wind blowing continuously near the equator.

Motley Bayes : many-sided dramatist. Bayes was a character in the burlesque play the *Rehearsal* (1671) by the Duke of Buckingham and others, which ridiculed the "heroic plays" then in vogue. It was Dryden who was satirised in the charac-

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ter of Bayes, but the name came to be applied humorously to any poet or author.

Pounded : Confined ; a pound or enclosure for stray cattle.

Backgammon : A game played with draughts or dice on a board divided in two and marked out in black and white spaces.

Loo : A card-game.

Vole : a winning hand at cards.

The main : A number called at dice, to be aimed at by the thrower.

Hot cockles : A children's game in which a player, with his eyes covered, has to guess who strikes him.

Farewell the tranquil mind : A parody of Othello's lines when suspecting Desdemona in Shakespeare's play.

The plumed head : fashionably dressed hair with a feather in it.

Cushion'd tete : an artificial padded head-dress ; *tete* is French for head, and also for a sofa for two persons. Seat was still pronounced sate in Sheridan's day.

Card drums : Drum was a name for an evening party arranged for card-playing.

Spadille : the ace of spades.

Pam : the knave of clubs.

Basto : the ace of clubs.

Brazen : of brass.

Periods : Sentences.

Blest were : Women would be blessed, who are like you—you who put an end to your faults, etc.

At large : on a large scale, extravagantly.

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Select Literary Criticism

(1)

Sheridan's Reputation

Great as Sheridan's reputation has always been, it may be doubted whether it has been as great as he deserves, when he is considered solely as the author of *The School for Scandal*, *The Rivals*, and *The Critic*. To any one who cannot concentrate his attention upon these he undoubtedly carries overweight. His political record is none too creditable ; and though deliberate dishonesty is nowhere proved against him, his behaviour in money matters was reckless, and in other branches of ordinary conduct questionable. *Pizarro* is rubbish : and *The Duenna* and *St. Patrick's Day* are not at all worthy of him. But the three masterpieces—all written before he was thirty—are, each in its own way and calibre, masterpieces pure and simple—of higher and lower comedy and of pure or partly pure farce. *The School for Scandal* has roundly and often been pronounced the best comedy in our tongue. These unqualified superlatives are generally rash ; and there could hardly be a rasher one than this, because comedy subdivides itself into so many different kinds. It would be as ridiculous to say that *The School for Scandal* is better than *Twelfth Night*, or *The Alchemist*, or *Love for Love*, as to say that a perfectly succeeded bottle of Lafite is better than one of Clos Vougeot, or of one of the best vintages of port. The things are different ; even in the case of Congreve's play, which comes nearest. In construction, Sheridan has the advantages ; in sheer wit Congreve. But if instead of this unsatisfactory fashion of comparison, we take the things of themselves, or in comparison only with the ideals of their kinds, a sensible person will want at the time nothing better than these adventures of the Teazles and the Surfaces. Of course the reproach of artificiality, which belongs to the whole school, is not to be utterly repelled. Theatrical presentation is a thing so essentially artificial in itself that, except in stages like those of the early Greek and the Elizabethan, when precedents have had no opportunity to accumulate and establish themselves, convention will force itself in. Playwrights, imitate playwrights, actors are trained by, or (which is almost worse) deliberately avoid imitating, other actors ; nay, the very audience, in some mysterious way, exhibits the effects of heredity in what it will accept and what it will not. Again Gray, as we noted above, said and said rightly, that the language of the

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actual time and country is never that of poetry. He might have added that the behaviour of the actual time and country is never the behaviour of the stage, though posterity constantly makes the mistake of thinking it so. If you turn from *The School for Scandal* to the contemporary diaries of Fanny Burney (who was so properly shocked at Sheridan's part in the Hastings trial), you will find how people, from princesses to professional men's daughters, really talked, and that it was not in the least like the conversation of the characters of the play ; just as if you turn to Anthony Trollope's novels you will find how people really talked in the sixties, and may contrast it advantageously with the lingo of Mr. Tom Robertson's dramas. But Sheridan is almost as little asphyxiated by the odour of sawdust as can be expected, and the result has justly been a continued life for the play during nearly a century and a half, with the little prospect of its own kind of art or imitation and that such masterpieces, of whatever kind or time, assimilate to some extent the vitality of nature itself ; partly to the other fact that Sheridan has introduced no very small dose of actual and perennial nature, fixed, by humour and wit ; but yet partly also, one may surely think, to the general moderating and preservative effect of some characteristics of the eighteenth century itself.

—*G. Saintsbury*

(2)

Characteristics of the Age of Sensibility

It is characteristic of the age of sensibility that this personal or biographical aspect of it should be so closely connected with its central technical feature. The basis of poetic language is the metaphor, and the metaphor, in its radical form, is a statement of identity ; this is that. In all our ordinary experience the metaphor is non-literal ; nobody but a savage or a lunatic can take metaphor literally. For Classical or Augustan critics the metaphor is a condensed simile : its real or common sense basis is likeness, not identity, and when it obliterates the sense of likeness it becomes barbaric. In Johnson's strictures on the music and water metaphor of Gray's Bard we can see what intellectual abysses, for him, would open up if metaphors ever passed beyond the stage of resemblance. For the Romantic critic the identification in the metaphor is ideal : two images are identified within the mind of the creating poet.

But where metaphor is conceived as part of an oracular and half-ecstatic process, there is a direct identification in which the poet himself is involved. To use another phrase of Rimbaud's, the poet feels not *je pense*, but on *me pense*. In the age of sensibility some of the identifications involving the poet seems manic, like Blake's with Druidic bards or Smart's with Hebrew prophets, or depressive, like Cowper's with a scapegoat figure, a stricken deer or castaway, or merely bizarre, like psychological self-identification that the central primitive quality of this age really emerges. In Collins *Ode on the*

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Poetical Character, in Smart's *Jublate Agon*, and in Blake's *Four Zoas*, it attains its greatest intensity and completeness.

In these three poems, especially the last two, God, the poet's soul and nature are brought into a white hot fusion of identity, an imaginative fiery furnace in which the reader may, if he chooses, make a fourth. All three poems are of the greatest complexity, yet the emotion on which they are founded is of a simplicity and directness that English literature has rarely attained again. With the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, secondary imagination and recollection in tranquillity took over English poetry and dominated it until the end of the nineteenth century. The primitivism of Blake and Smart revived in France with Rimbaud and Gerard de Nerval, but even this development had become conservative by the time its influence reached England, and only in a few poems of Dylan Thomas, and those perhaps not his best, does the older tradition revive. But contemporary poetry is still deeply concerned with the problems and techniques of the age of sensibility, and while the latter's resemblance to our time is not a merit in it, it is a logical enough reason for re-examining it with fresh eyes.

—*Northrop Frye*

(3)

Dramatic Star of the First Magnitude

Mr. Sheridan has been justly called a dramatic star of the first magnitude ; and, indeed, among the comic writers of the last century, he shines like Hesperus among the lesser lights. He has left four several dramas behind him, all different or of different kinds, and all excellent in their way ; *The School for Scandal, The Rivals, The Duenna* and *The Critic.* The attraction of this last piece is, however, less in the mock tragedy rehearsed, than in the dialogue of the comic scenes, and in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary, which is supposed to have been intended for Cumberland. If some of the characters in *The School for Scandal* were contained in Murphy's comedy of *Know Your Own Mind* (and certainly some of Dashwood's detached speeches and satirical sketches are written with quite as firm and masterly a hand as any of those given to the members of the scandalous club, Mrs. Candour or Lady Sneerwell) yet they were buried in it for want of grouping and relief, like the colours of a well-drawn picture sunk in the canvas. Sheridan brought them out and exhibited them in all their glory. If that gem, the character of Joseph Surface, was Murphy's, the splendid and more valuable setting was Sheridan's. He took Murphy's Malvil from his lurking place in the closet, and dragged the struggling monster into day upon the stage. That is, he gave interest, life and action, or in other words, its dramatic being, to the mere conception and written specimens of a character. That is the merit of Sheridan's comedies, that everything in them tells ; there is no labour in vain. His Comic Muse does not go about prying into obscure corners, or collecting

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idle curiosities, but shows her laughing face, and points to her rich treasure—the follies of mankind. She is garlanded and crowned with roses and wine-leaves. Her eyes sparkle with delight, and her heart runs over with good natured malice. Her step is firm and light, and her ornaments consummate. *The School for Scandal* is, if not the most original, perhaps the most finished and faultless comedy which we have. When it is acted you hear people all around you exclaiming, "Surely it is impossible for anything to be cleverer". The scene in which Charles sells all the old family pictures but his uncle's, who is the purchaser in disguise, and that of the discovery of Lady Teazle when the screen falls, are among the happiest and most highly wrought that comedy in its wide and brilliant range, can boast. Besides the wit and ingenuity of this play, there is a genial spirit of frankness and generosity about it, that relieves the heart as well as habitual depravity of human nature. While it strips of the mask of hypocrisy, it inspires a confidence between man and man. As often as it is acted, it must serve to clear the air of that low, creeping, pestilent fog of cant and mysticism, which threatens to confound every native impulse, or honest conviction, in the nauseous belief of a perpetual lie, and the laudable profession of systematic hypocrisy. The character of Lady Teazle is not well made out by the author ; nor has it been well represented on the stage since the time of Miss Farren.

—*William Hazlitt*

(4)

Criticism of Sheridan

No writers have injured the Comedy of England so deeply as Congreve and Sheridan. Both were man of splendid wit and polished taste. Unhappily, they made all their characters in their own likeness. Their works bear the same relation to the legitimate drama which a transparency bears to a painting. There are no delicate touches, no hues imperceptibly fading into each other : the whole is lighted up with an universal glare. Outlines and tints are forgotten in the common blaze which illuminates all. The flowers and fruits of the intellect abound ; but it is the abundance of a jungle, not of a garden, unwholesome, bewildering, unprofitable from its very plenty, rank from its very fragrance. Every fop, every boor, every valet, is a man of wit. The very butts and dupes, Tattle, Witwould, Puff, Acres, outshine the whole Htel of Rambouillet. To prove the whole system of this school erroneous, it is only necessary to apply the test which dissolved the enchanted Florimel, to place the true by the false Thalia, to contrast the most celebrated characters which have been drawn by the writers of whom we speak with the Bastard in *King John* or the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*. It was not surely from want of wit that Shakespeare adopted so different a manner. Benedick and Beatrice throw Mirabel and Millamant into the shade. All the good sayings of the facetious houses of Absolute and Surface might have been clipped from the single character of Falstaff,

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without being missed. It would have been easy for that fertile mind to have given Bardolph and Shallow as much wit as Prince Hall, and to have made Dogberry and Verges retort on each other in sparkling epigrams. But he knew that such indiscriminate prodigality was, to use his own admirable language, from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was, and is, to hold as it were, the mirror up to Nature

—*J. B. Macaulay*

(5)

Sheridan's Artificial Comedies

Sheridan's two great plays, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, are classified as Artificial Comedies of Manners yet it is their relative freedom from artificiality that puts them above the rest of their kind. The opening moment of *The Rivals*, when the Coachman and Fag meet in a street in Bath, catch at once the tones of 'nature', the illusion of naturalness, that Goldsmith just failed to master ; while the second scene (a dressing-room in Mrs. Malaprop's lodgings) introduces convincingly the theme of romantic sentimentality, mocked in the character of Lydia Languish, whose lending-library fare consists of such novels of 'sensibility' as *The Reward of Constancy*, *The Fatal Connexion*, *The Mistakes of the Heart*, *The Delicate Distress*, *The Tears of Sensibility*, *The Innocent Adultery*, and *The Man of Feeling*—the kind of fiction that causes Sir Anthony Absolute to declare to Lydia's aunt, Mrs. Malaprop, that 'a circulating library in a town is as an ever-green tree of diabolical knowledge !...And depend on it...they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last'. Less skilfully managed, the immortal Mrs. Malaprop would have become an insufferable bore, but though Sheridan exploits to the full her habit of misapplying words, the trick is never overdone and is used to build up a truly comic human being who claims and retains our liking and never slides wholly into caricature. The young men, Captain Absolute and Faulkland, appear less natural than excellent and agreeable successor to Tony Lumpkin ; while Lucius O' Trigger's conversation when he enters with pistols in the last scene to second Bob in the never-to-be-fought duel with Absolute.

—*A. C. Ward*

(6)

Eighteenth Century Sentimental Drama

Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) was effective as an attack on the immorality of the drama because it coincided with a rising tide of bourgeois opinion. Restoration drama was written for a homogeneous audience of court wits who looked with equal contempt on London merchants and country squires. But the homogeneity of theatrical

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audiences was rapidly giving way to something much more mixed ; the rising middle classes, who were buying their way into the squirarchy and the aristocracy, and the same situation which led Addison and Steele to write essays to provide a cultural surface for Londoners seeking to move with some assurance in society led to the theatres being filled by people who did not quite know whether to be titillated or shocked by the Restoration ethos. The drama reflected this uncertainty. Instead of the witty play between the sexes in which the conflicting claims of security, reputation, and sensual appetite were balanced against each other in a fundamentally amoral manner, we find indecency and innuendo in the first four acts being replaced by repentance and moral sententiousness in the fifth, which was a way of having one's cake and eating it. This transitional and hybrid kind of comedy soon gave way to a kind more thoroughly sentimental and moral. These terms can be variously defined, but in this context "sentimental" implies the mixing and even interrupting of action with frequent displays and expressions of pity and other emotions indicating a tender mind and a heart easily moved, while "moral" means the equally frequent expression of edifying generalization, sometimes self-congratulatory, sometimes reproving, as well as a plot calculated to show virtue rewarded and vice frustrated. It is easy to be condescending about the influence of bourgeois morality on the drama, but we must remember that all great literature has a true moral pattern and the amorality of Restoration comedy, however brilliantly it might show, was based on a shallow and cruel view of life on which no truly great art could be founded. Our condescension is inevitable, however, because the morality in so many early eighteenth-century plays is laid on so crudely and thickly and is not adequately realized in the texture of the work as a whole. Richard Steele, who made a genuine and praiseworthy effort to replace the hollow moral world of Restoration drama by something with more humanity and decency, produced four comedies (including *The Tender Husband*, 1705, and *The Conscious Lovers*, 1722) which are of interest because of the determined belief in the essential goodness of the human heart which they display, and the manner in which he manipulates the action to illustrate this belief but though there are moments of tremulous emotion and intense pathos, as well as some lively dialogue and comic incidents, the plays are not true comedy in any acceptable sense of the term ; they have not the wit of Congreve, the power of Ben Jonson, or the golden combination of humour and wonder we find in "Shakespeare's middle comedies" ; they are of interest as indications of a trend rather than as fully realized works of dramatic art.

—*David Daiches*

(7)

Sheridan—A Writer of Great Comedies

The School for Scandal stands above all Sheridan's plays. Both *The Rivals* and *The Critic*, or *A Tragedy Rehearsed* are plays of great quality, enough by themselves, to have created a high reputation for

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their author. Sheridan's one tragedy, *Pizarro*, is an incredibly dull piece, interesting only because it shows that even a great wit can sometimes be a great bore. But it was something of a miracle that inside four years three indisputably great comedies, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Rivals*, and *The School for Scandal*, should suddenly have disturbed the stream of tedious stuff which had flowed through the English theatre for fifty years and was to continue its flow for nearly a century. Goldsmith and Sheridan were brilliant flares which showed how deep the surrounding darkness was, and when they went out the darkness was deeper. After their death, the drama in England rapidly dropped into the gutter, and was not drawn out of it again until a hundred years had passed.

—*John Drinkwater*

(8)

A Homogeneous Work of Art

The School for Scandal is a more homogeneous work of art. Nothing truly disturbs the constant glitter of its wit and the situations are never exaggerated or bizarre ; rather do they stand forward as among the most perfect in the English theatre. No single scene possible has won so much fame as the screen episode in Act IV of this play. Again there is satire of the sentimental strain in the person of Joseph Surface but this direct satire is subordinate to the expression of free wit which irradiates all the characters. There is no attempt here to catch the subtle delicacy of Goldsmith's comedies, no effort to seize upon the inner movements of the human heart, no introduction of kindliness or emotion, all is crystal clear, and that which furnishes the humour of the play is as in the comedies of Etherege and Congreve, not the traits of mankind, but their social manners.

With *The School for Scandal* we reach the culmination of the anti-sentimental movement. This, as it were, was the last word of the Augustan writers, for sentimentalism is, in its own way, the forerunner of romance. Kelly and Cumberland passed away, but out of their supersensitive style arose the deeper humanitarianism of the revolutionary and romantic periods. The poets of the nineteenth century, full of heroic ardours and serious ideals, were not given to laughter, and the comedy, of manners for nearly a century vanished from the world of creative drama.

—*Allardyce Nicoll*

(9)

Nothing so Brilliant, so Incisive

It is a curious particular in the excellence of the piece however, and scarcely a commendation we fear, in the point of view of art, that these very striking scenes, as well as those in which the scandal mongers hold their amusing conclave, may all be [illegible]

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setting with the greatest ease and without any perceptible loss of interest. Never was there a drama which it was so easy to take to pieces. The screen scene in itself forms, as we have already pointed out, a succinct and brilliant little performance which the simplest audience could understand ; and though the others might require a word or two of preface, they are each sufficiently perfect in themselves to admit of separation from the context. It says a great deal for the power of the writer that this should be consistent with the general interest of the comedy, and that we are scarcely conscious in the acting, of the looseness with which it hangs together, or the independence of the different parts. Sheridan who was playwright—rather by accident, did not in all likelihood, in the exuberance of his youthful strength, trouble himself with any study of the laws that regulate dramatic composition. The unities of time and place he preserves, indeed, because it suits him to do so ; the incidents of his pieces might all happen in few hours for anything we close composition and interweaving of one part with another, which all dramatists ought, but so very few do, study, evidently cost him little thought. He has the quickest eye for a situation, and knows that nothing pleases the playgoing public so much as a strong combination and climax ; but he does not take the trouble to rivet the links of his chain or fit them very closely into each other. It is a wonderful tribute to his power, that, notwithstanding this looseness of construction, few people object to allow to *The School for Scandal* the pre-eminence accorded to it by admiring contemporaries as being the best modern English comedy. There is more nature and more story in *She Stoops to Conquer* ; but nothing so brilliant, so incisive, no such concentration of all the forces of Art, and nothing like the sparkle of the dialogue, the polish and ease of diction. Goldsmith's play, though produced only three or four years before, is a generation older in atmosphere and sentiment ; but it is the only one which has proved a competitor with Sheridan's great comedy, or that we can compare with it. To go back to Shakespeare and place these brilliant studies of Society in the eighteenth century by the side of that radiant world of imagination which took refuge in the woods of Arden, or found a place in the enchanted island, would be futile indeed. It would be little less foolish than to compare Sheridan's prologues and occasional verses with the *Allegro* and the *Il Penseroso*. It was not his to sound the depths of human thought or mount to any height of fancy. Rosalind and Prospero were out of his reckoning altogether ; but for a lively observation of what was going on upon the surface of life, with an occasional step a little way beyond : and a fine instinct for that concentration of incident and interest which make a striking dramatic scene, nobody has excelled him, and very few indeed reach anything like the level of his power.

—*Mrs. Oliphant*

(10)

Sheridan—A Great Figure of London Society

In order to understand Sheridan's career it is necessary always to keep in mind that he had only one deep ambition, and that this

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had nothing to do specifically either with politics or the theatre. His determination was from the first to be an important figure in the little Great World of London society. In the eighteenth century this was not the ignoble aspiration which it would appear today. It is almost true to say that if a man desired to live the perfect life he had in those days to be both well-born and rich. Unless he could fulfil both these conditions he could appear in high society only as a hanger-on. Sheridan seems from the first to have felt himself destined for great things, and to have set himself at a very early age to achieve a position which, on the face of it, seemed utterly out of his reach. He was very well acquainted with the Great World of fashion, for his family had lived successively in Dublin, London, and Bath ; and to Bath every year in due season the fashionable world migrated. Sheridan's father had by this time made up his mind to the fact that London no longer regarded him as a leading actor, and had resigned himself-not always with a good grace—to a prosperous but comparatively undistinguished existence as a teacher of elocution. His son Richard had, therefore, opportunities of mixing with great ladies and gentlemen and observing their manners and foibles. This stood him in wonderful stead when he came to write plays about them, but it was not for this purpose that he sought their company. He wanted to be one of them—one of the most important of them.

—*W. A. Darlington*

(11)

Eighteenth Century Comedy

Vanbrugh (1664-1726) wrote *The Relapse* (1697), *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), *The Confederacy* (1705), and the lively fragment *A Journey to London* which Colley Cibber completed as *The Provok'd Husband* (1728) ; he provides clear plots, good cues, easy cynicism and sentiment, and energy rising to strong satire in *The Provo k'd Wife's* Sir John Brute. Farquhar (1678-1707) produced genial comedy of provincial humour in *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux's Stratagem* (1707). To venture into comedy of Cibber, Mrs. Centlivre and Steele, is to descend too far into the second-rate ; it is more necessary to note how Restoration wit-cynicism modulated through a more extended and sober taste, into virtue and didacticism (Cibber made a small and Steele a larger contribution here), and by the 1750's into sentimentality, against which Goldsmith's comedies of humour—*The Good-Natured Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773)—are reactions, and Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* an anti-hypocrisy satire. Of all the dramatists mentioned, Sheridan (1751-1816) is doubtless the best known ; to name *The Rivals* (1775), *St. Patrick's Day* (1775), *The School for Scandal* (1777), and *The Critic* (1779) is to recall clear plot, excellent cuing, captivating stage-situations managed with deceptive ease, and agile wit and fun. The 1770's which contain these plays as well as *She Stoops to Conquer*, are a most fruitful decade in comedy.

—*A. R. Humphreys*

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(12)

Prose Style

As in the poetry, a limitation of vocabulary was exercised. In the long run the general tendency was towards greater formality, as can be seen in the passage from the easy conversational style of Dryden to the balance and dignity of Johnson. As the aristocratic supremacy in life and letters of the Restoration period yielded to the middle class in the next century, the language naturally conformed to the change. The colloquial and easy, as well as the coarse, were avoided for fear of being 'low'. The free sparkling wit of Restoration drama was not to the taste of the later audiences who were addicts of the genteel sentimental drama ; they might let Goldsmith and Sheridan laugh at their taste, but those dramatists had to observe greater propriety of speech than Wycherley and Congreve. A sense of literary 'kinds' was felt in prose too, though with less force. Thus No. 25 of the *Guardian* (1713) declared that an historian's style must be majestic and grave, as well as simple and unaffected ; his narrative should be animated, short, and clear, so as even to outrun the impatience of the reader, if possible. This can only be done by being very sparing and choice in words'—a remark followed by disapproval of Bacon's style in his *Henry VII*, for Bacon 'lived in an age wherein chaste and correct writing was not in fashion'.

—*A. S. Collins*

(13)

Absence of Didacticism

With him, however, comedy regains, in addition to the shining beauty of form, almost all the ease of movement it had with Congreve. Here the joy of a feast of the mind, in which satire speaks to the intelligence more than to the moral sense, suffers unto itself. It is fed by sallies of the most fertile verse ; and a gift of style equal to that of the best classical writers secures for every line a quality of finished art. This liberty with regard to any moralizing aim on the part of the author is further completed by a critical independence towards sentiment. While in Bath and London, Sheridan had frequented the circles of fashion, where the cult of wit and irony was sharpened into a disparaging hostility to the Puritanism of the middle class. In such surroundings he had breathed a belated remnant of the atmosphere of the Restoration. No doubt, the desire for sincere simplicity which forms the deeper strain of his nature revolts against the artificiality of such aims ; he writes his most amusing comedy against the poisoned slander of the drawing rooms ; but he is too much the master of epigram to make it really hateful to us ; his thesis has scarcely any power of conviction, and is only a pretext for sparkling dialogues.

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—*Louis Cazamian*

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(14)

Sheridan's Ideal

His own ideal is that of a lively and spontaneous light-heartedness, the carefree temper of which conceals the best instincts. In the sentimental attitude then in vogue, he thus denounces the suspicious excess, the association with a hollow moralism, the hypocrisy which it implies ; his Joseph Surface is a Tartuffe of tender emotions and fine maxims. In the same way, he is irritated by the pretensions of heroic tragedy to a highflown eloquence and sublimity, and he adds one of the most amusing parodies to the list which *The Rehearsal* had opened. But when in his turn he comes to compose a tragedy, it is not less declamatory than the others...His work, without being in any way didactic, nevertheless recommends and suggests a sort of natural morality, an optimistic confidence in the goodness of man's heart, a philosophy in the manner of Diderot, which is not free from the diffuse sentimentalism of the period.

—*Louis Cazamian*

(15)

Sheridan's Comedies

The Rivals is a youthful, gay comedy of no great substance, but one in which the joyous fancy of the author creates an atmosphere of almost poetical unreality ; on a ground of imitation memories of the Restoration, and of Moliere—there stand out figures that are new, or appear to be so. Without daring to disappoint the public completely in its sentimental expectation, the play outlines in the name of sound reason a reaction of temperament and taste against the whole range of pre-Romantic preferences. *The School for Scandal* combines several plots, through the saving virtue of an irresistible gaiety and talent ; and Sheridan in it has given the English theatre some of its wittiest scenes. *The Critic*, less equal in quality, again gives full play to a rather cruel, satirical verve, which had been somewhat repressed in the preceding work by the moral purpose of the author ; in addition to the burlesque, derisive fun poked at the bomb type of writing—a satire imitated from Buckingham and Fielding—the comedy offers us a broad lively study of the social forms which the secret strife of exasperated pride takes with authors and critics alike. Here again, many passages recall Moliere, and are not unworthy of him.

—*Louis Cazamian*

(16)

The Real Sheridan

What was the real Sheridan like ? He was too good an artist to give himself away in his plays, though there are one or two remarks

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which do sound as if they came from the heart ; for instance, "Nothing could excuse the interference of their tongues but a natural and ungovernable bitterness of mind" or, "all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing else in Nature beside". The former may suggest that he, himself a victim of scandal, was conscious of having been betrayed at times into excessive bitterness foreign to his usual good-temper, and the latter that he was genuinely critical of the stiff formality of his actor father and his schoolmaster grandfather, and pleading with his own generation for a more natural poise. He lived in a circle that had many French connections and it was a Frenchman who said, "He who did not live before 1789 does not know the joy of life". There is in his plays the polished elegance and glowing wit of the French Salons of this time. The society of contemporary France under the lead of the Queen was reverting from the artificiality of Versailles to a love of the country and, when Sheridan makes Lady Teazle say "I wish it was Spring all the year round and that roses grew under one's feet", he was penning a sentiment that must have been very common in Sheridan's set—a pose. But we must not press this too far. A greater dramatist than Sheridan and one to whom he was indebted, Moliere, protesting against the criticisms levelled at his *Ecole Des Femmes* (School for Wives) and in particular at one of its jokes, said, "The author did not mean it for a joke but only to indicate the man's character" : and in the same way it is impossible to pick out anything said in these plays and say, "This is the real Sheridan !" Yet when, as in *The Critic*, we find him poking sly fun at himself and making the actors solemnly declaim their own virtues, we cannot be blind to the evidence of youthful high spirits : he must have been a practical joker. That he could be eloquent we know from his famous speech in the Warren Hastings trial : even if we had no such evidence, we could find it in many passages which proclaim the orator, especially in *The Critic*.

—*C. H. Lockitt*

(17)

Comedy of Manners

The comedy of manners was introduced into England, by Congreve and Wycherley at the end of the seventeenth century but neither was the equal of Moliere. Moliere's characters are types rather than individuals and the plays interest by reason of the skilful delineation of the characters, the brilliant and witty conversation, and the picture which they give of society. In a play called the *Criticism of the School for Wives* (*La critique de l' Ecole des Femmes*) Moliere has some interesting things to say about the objective of his comedies. "Satires like this," he says, "aim directly at manners and strike individuals only by rebound" ; and again, "Everybody should look at the absurd conceptions staged in the theatre without being annoyed : they are public mirrors where we ought never to admit that we see our own reflexions." Congreve's best play, *The Way of the World*, was published in 1700 ; two years earlier Jeremy Collier had issued

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his attack on the stage of his time and protested against the entire disregard of any moral standard by the authors. As a result, "sentimental" comedy, sometimes called the comedy of "good feeling", took its rise. It has been described as "the deliberately pathetic treatment of a moral sentiment". Goldsmith wrote an essay on it, in which he says, "almost all the characters are good and exceedingly generous ; they are lavish enough of their tin money on the stage ; and though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foxibles, the spectator is taught, not only to pardon but to applaud them in consideration of the goodness of their hearts ; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended." This essay was written in 1773, four years before the production of *The School for Scandal*, and Goldsmith himself was one of the first to endeavour to write comedies which returned to the earlier comedy of manners, refined however by the higher standard of public morals : *The Good-natured Man* was produced in 1768 and *She Stoops to Conquer in* 1773. But these plays never quite threw off the influence of the sentimental drama ; the audiences of fine ladies and gentleman had no objection to seeing their follies represented as in a mirror, but they did not desire nor expect to see the disastrous consequences of those follies ; so that the foolish escape the results of their folly, for the audience has the last word. *The School for Scandal* is plainly a comedy of manners, and sentiment, in the person of Joseph Surface, is equally plainly ridiculed ; though Sheridan is of all our writers of comedy nearest to Moliere, even he lets Lady Teazle and Charles and Joseph off very lightly indeed. Sheridan's play led the way to the "domestic" comedy of our own times.

—*C. H. Lockitt*

(18)

Scandal Mongers

The School for Scandal is prefaced by a "portrait" addressed to Mrs. Crewe, a well-known member of fashionable society, in which Sheridan celebrates her virtues as something which even scandal cannot touch. This elegant compliment in verse is followed by Garrick's prologue, after which the play begins by taking the audience into the very heart of scandal, Lady Sneerwell's boudoir, in which all the scandal-mongers gradually assemble. These people bear a superficial resemblance to the scandal-mongers in Moliere's *Le Misanthrope* in that, like Sneer in *The Critic*, their "jest is always at the expense of their friend." No personal relationships can prevent them from scoring a hit : their motives only vary ; with Lady Teazle it is "pleasantry", with old Crabtree malice, and, as for Lady Sneerwell, she herself admits that "wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of Slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation". Of them all, perhaps Mrs. Candour is the

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most objectionable, for her defence of her unfortunate "friends" is more venomous than the open onslaughts of the others ; she is both hypocrite and slanderer.

—*C. H. Lockitt*

(19)

Dramatic Qualities

There is nothing particularly original about *The School for Scandal*. Sheridan has been accused of borrowing from other writers. Arthur Murphy—but he was a cross-grained person—declared that Sheridan had stolen some of the best thoughts from his own *Know Your Own Mind* ; critics have noted various resemblances. Little premium is, they say, only Little Transfer in Foote's *The Minor* ; Charles and Joseph Surface are merely Tom Jones and Blifil up to date ; Stockwell in Cumberland's *West Indian* postpones recognition of his son Belcour until he has made trial of his character ; some point out that Sir Peter is just the traditional stage old man as Charles is the traditional young man. There may be truth in these accusations ; what lifts Sheridans' play above the work of his contemporaries is the sparkle and wit of the dialogue and the admirable sense of stage effect, as displayed, for instance, in the famous screen scene ; how admirable may be seen by comparing it with the similar scene in *She Stoops to Conquer* when old Marlow and Hardcastle hide behind a screen. Sheridan's scene is dramatic because it is all so natural and because it is throughout the unexpected that happens ; it is in keeping with Sir Peter's credulous nature that he should instantly believe the story of the little milliner and consents to go into the cupboard ; it is in keeping with Charles's impetuous temperament that he should pull Sir Peter out of it ; and it is in keeping with an old man's garrulity that he should so promptly let out the secret which he has just promised to keep. Lady Teazle had no reason to expect her husband to appear, yet the audience would know that he had determined 'to open his mind on the subject' of Lady Teazle and Charles 'to my friend Joseph' ; Joseph did not expect Charles to call on him nor Sir Peter's sudden determination to test his suspicions ; and the lure of a pretty girl is so strong with Charles that his action in throwing down the screen is as impulsive as it is unexpected.

—*C. H. Lockitt*

(20)

Sheridan's Achievement

The play was a great success. Horace Walpole—not an easy person to please—writes under date May 16th, 1778, just a year after its first production, "I have seen Sheridan's new comedy and liked it much better than any I have seen since *The Provoked Husband* (a play by Colley Cibber first produced in 1728 in which, incidentally,

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Lord and Lady Townley are just another such pair as Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. 'There is a good deal of wit', he goes on, 'and good situations, but it is too long, has two or three bad scenes that might easily be omitted, and seemed to me to want nature and truth of character : but I have not read it and sat too high to hear well.' Two years later he writes, 'Apropos to the theatre I have read *The School for Scandal* ; it is rapid and lively but is far from containing the wit I expected from seeing it acted.' But a casual reference in a letter of 1778 tends to show that within a year its characters were finding their way into everyday speech. Walpole writes to a lady complaining of gout and rheumatism and adds, 'I have been constantly as broad awake as any Mrs. Candour that is always gaping for scandal, except when I have taken opiates, and then my dreams have been as extravagant as all Mrs. Candour adds to what she hears.

— *C. H. Lockitt*

(21)

Stage Conditions

Drury Lane and Covent Garden were the only theatres at which the spoken drama, which hence came to be called "the legitimate," could legally be presented. Other houses could only offer musical entertainments, burlettas or spectacular displays. The two theatres therefore, were the sole ones at which a play could be performed as it was written ; but when, in 1792, Covent Garden was rebuilt, and Drury Lane, following two years later, was enlarged to hold 500 more, even this encouragement to the author was gone. Niceties of acting were lost, and spectacle, horsemanship and aquatics, had to be called in to make it pay. These theatres had been enlarged to meet the increased demand by the lower classes, but the aristocracy kept away, frequenting instead the Italian opera at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Plays thus had by means of broad strokes and straight-forward humour, to please the rabble, whose dictatorship finds ample proof in the famous O. P. riots at Covent Garden in 1809. They had resented an increased charge of sixpence in the pit, and insisted on the Old Prices. Rioting, largely owing to Kemble's tactlessness, lasted sixtyone nights, the actors being driven from the stage and snuff and sparrows let loose among the audience. Finally, there was a truce and the old prices were restored.

The popular style of acting was another encumbrance to the author. It was useless for a man to write any really original dialogue when he knew the stereotyped delivery would make it sound worse than conventional hack work. Cumberland, in his memoirs, observes that "Quin...with very little variation of cadence and in a deep full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action which had more of the senate than of the stage in it, rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference," while Mrs. Cibber's voice, "though it did not wound the ear, wearied it."

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But Garrick was "alive in every muscle and every feature", and destroyed "the illusion of imposing declamation." He changed the conventional declamation into an easier and more expressive style. In 1762 moreover, he rid the stage of all people but the actors—a great advance and in 1765 instituted footlights. Dress was very sumptuous, it being customary for nobles to give their clothes to actors. Thus Queen Adelaide gave her coronation dress, and Betterton had Charles II's robes.

—*Robert Herring*

(22)

Sheridan's Achievement

The School for Scandal remains the best English satirical comedy and it was not until the next period of prosperity that any came near it again, and then, when comedy flowered with Wilde, the blooms were more exotic than exquisite. It is below Moliere only, as Professor Saintsbury observes, "in a certain universality" : at the same time, the full import of these four words must be considered, especially as regards what goes to make universality. To claim that it stands alone, without props or neighbours, is extravagant, the more so as Sheridan was a notorious "borrower," taking ideas (as commentators delight to point out), from everywhere—in this case from *Tartuffe* and *Le Misanthrope*, as well as from his mother's *Sidney Biddulph*. Charles Surface in money affairs, again, is supposed to be like Honeywood in *The Good-Natur'd Man* ; but Charles is a type, and might be found in any play with extravagant young men, the sterling of whose hearts, we know, makes up for the lack of gold in their pockets.

—*Robert Herring*

(23)

Sheridan and Goldsmith

Sheridan and Goldsmith stand out because they withstood the emotional softness of their time (when tragedy is inarticulate, emotion finds vent as sentimentality in comedy), and because, as has been said, their deserts were enhanced by circumstance. *The School for Scandal* has also been popular because its fine acting opportunities ensure its frequent presentation. Each of the chief characters has his (or her) big scene, and the parts are such as appeal to actors mainly keen on a good "vehicle" for their personalities. The situations are effective, there is no subtle characterisation to bother about (save in the case of Joseph, and, so long as he is made so obvious a villain that no one would believe him, the audience is satisfied). The characters in this play are types—Lady Teazle, the country girl dazzled by fashion ; Rowley, the faithful servant ; Sir Oliver, the greatest of Stage—uncles ; Maria, the *ingenue* who is not allowed to meet her lover till the last act.

—*Robert Herring*

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Plot Construction

The play has two plots—that of the slanderers and that of the contrasted brothers. The plots are linked by the Teazles: Lady Teazle is the *protegee* of the slanderers, Sir Peter is guardian of the brothers. The scenes of the two plots are Sneerwell's Academy and Charles Surface's picture gallery: to the former of these is added Joseph's library, to the latter, Sir Peter's home. There are various go-betweens that join up the characters further. Lady Sneerwell has Snake; Charles has Rowley; Lady Teazle, Maria. Sir Oliver effects the weaving of the surface strands with Sir Peter, as Maria does with Lady Sneerwell and Lady Teazle.

But all this elaborate plaiting would not in itself have produced so smooth a play, and had there not been a main theme, it would have remained as involved as any comedy of the Restoration. The underlying theme here is "Never believe what is said." Sir Oliver, home from the Indies, is its mouthpiece—he alone never believes in Joseph—and the rest are its examples. Sir Peter, who is ever mistaken in his life rails at scandal whilst believing all he hears of Charles and of Charles's relations with his wife. She, in her turn, is taken in by Joseph and the Sneerwell set, and even Maria believes all that is said against Charles. The working of the plot may now be better understood.

—*Robert Herring*

(25)

The Dialogue

The dialogue is the chief pleasure of the play. It gives life and character to the personages, even if Sheridan frequently does not bother to see if it is in character, so that Sir Peter on occasion turns an epigram as neatly as Sir Benjamin, and "Well, well" is a catch-phrase employed by the whole cast. But it is delightful, crisp and easy prose, written both for the eye and ear, so that to quite mediocre "sentiments" it gives a vivacity and remains the final expression of many previously-repeated maxims. Dialogue and situation are Sheridan's gifts, and he uses them so well that they usually conceal his deficiencies of action and characterisation. He can prepare and pave the way in his dialogue, but he cannot so well make it "get on with the business". Lady Sneerwell's opening explanation, and many of the soliloquies, may seem old devices, though they were not then, yet note how deftly all his threads are worked in—Joseph, in Act I, mentioning Snake's defection to Rowley which seems just chat until the end of the play; and, similarly, Sir Oliver's return is hinted at by Crabtree; while Rowley drops the news of Sir Peter's fatal call on Joseph delicately in our ears. Sheridan was a man of letters, and as such he sometimes elaborated the repartee at the expense of dramatic significance; while it is also worth noticing that he dropped a writing career for a speaking career, under Rockingham.

—*Robert Herring*

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Selected Critical Questions With Answers

Q. 1. Write a short essay on eighteenth century comedy and indicate Sheridan's place in it.

Or

Q. 2. Write briefly on Sheridan as a writer of comedies emphasizing his characteristics and achievements.

The Scope of Comedy

The term 'comedy' does not carry a definitive signification. Most people commit the mistake of regarding it as synonymous with Shakespeare's productions like *As You Like It*. In reality Shakespeare's romantic comedy is only one of the sub-divisions of comedy. There are many definitions of comedy—brilliant, incisive, and profound. But it is sometimes desirable to avoid the nobler speculations and try to hold fast to concrete and readily observable elements. Any comedy will include one or a number of these features : (1) Comedy of character types, (2) Amusing intrigues and situations, (3) Wit of language, (4) Satiric commentary on human foibles, and (5) Idyllic love stories whose strongest appeal is the warm glow with which they fill the audience. Since in a play all parts are originally fused, these features are closely related. Comic figures represent a satire on society, and their success as comic figures may be based on witty lines or on the situations in which they are played. Yet one has to try to make arbitrary distinctions, simply because without them analysis is impossible.

Master of Comedy

Sheridan was a master of four of the five kinds of comedy listed above. (It is difficult to see that he had any success, or desire for success, with the idyllic love story that arouses a warm glow). But what accounts for his reputation as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, English writer of comedy ? Other dramatists have created amusing characters, have written incisive social satire, and have invented witty dialogue. Sheridan's admirers say that

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Sheridan's comic characters go beyond others, that his dialogue is wittier, his situations funnier, and his satire more biting. Yet this is more difficult to illustrate, for other readers may find Garrick funnier or Mrs. Centlivre's situations more farcical.

Quantitative Assessment

Our age says that which can be approached quantitatively can be demonstrated or proven. It might be worthwhile to try to steal a page from the book of the scientists and make quantitative statements. One can say that Sheridan has more comic situations, that they are more varied, and that they are never allowed to disintegrate into literal statement. One can say that Sheridan's characters follow their comic bents more consistently and that more comedy is derived from them than is usual. One can say that Sheridan has more witty lines and that more wit is somehow poured into each line than in the works of other dramatists.

Array of Comic Characters

To illustrate, *The Rivals* has an amazing array of comic characters. With the exceptions of Julia, every character is comic. Many are based on common stage types. Yet out of these theatrical types Sheridan gets new and additional humour. Sir Anthony Absolute is the traditional tyrannical father. This is not new, but his quarrels with his son are different. Lines such as, 'I am sure, Sir 'tis more unreasonable in you to object to (marrying) a lady you know nothing of', carrying this comedy one step farther than usual. The insight that makes Jack Absolute lose his calmness and become just as irascible, if more debonair than his father accounts for another step in characterization. And finally, the turn given the second quarrel that arises when Jack says he is agreeable and will marry the girl is beyond most dramatists. Sir Anthony can be angry when his son voices his right to an opinion on the woman he is to marry; he is also angry when his son refuses to have an opinion.

Comic Genius

Faulkland's obsession is highly comic in a wry way. He refuses to believe that Julia loves him adequately. There are a number of specific scenes that have as their major purpose the presentation of this weird trait. After every quarrel with his fiancee, Faulkland is filled with remorse; at their next meeting, he voices the same suspicions. The real difference between Sheridan and other dramatists is that Sheridan never lets up until he has wrung the last drop of laughter from every situation. In a scene with Jack, devoted to quite different problems, Faulkland mentions that he has received a letter from Julia forgiving his last offence and he wonders whether she forgives too easily. Did not this show an instability of character? Even the professional reader is caught off-guard—Sheridan can always take the comedy one step beyond what one expects. If one also stops to consider the great number of characters, that

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least of them clearly individualized for comic effect, then Sheridan's genius becomes clear.

Comic Situations

A comic situation is easier to describe than to define. When a character talks freely about another and then finds that the object of his malicious remarks can overhear him, that is a comic situation. If a man courts a middle-aged widow, thinking he is wooing a beautiful belle, that is a comic situation. When two cowards are duelling, each believing the other to be a professional bully, that is a comic situation.

In Sheridan, all situations are comic. Many writers lose the comic touch when the business of the plot has to be moved forward. Sheridan almost never does. In *The School for Scandal* the scenes leading up to, and including the sale of, family portraits are necessary for the advancement of the plot. Each scene is made a comic situation ; by a servant who wants to borrow money, just like his master ; by a Jewish money-lender, not himself particularly comic, caught in the middle between two men who are playing parts ; by double-edged handling of the irony of the profligate who condescends to the money-lender who is actually his wealthy uncle.

The Screen Scene

Some people consider the screen scene in *The School for Scandal* the greatest comic scene in English drama. The plot would always make it a fine melodramatic scene ; that it is a great comic scene is due to the manner in which Sheridan took advantage of all its possibilities, Joseph's attempt at seduction has a kind of hilarious truth ; Sir Peter's lines create acute embarrassment in his host, and we can enjoy it. In the light of what the audience knows, Sir Peter's and Charles's lines have considerable comic irony. Even in the fifth act, where Sheridan is busy tying up loose ends, he can still discover and exploit comic potential. When Sir Oliver arrives, now in his own person, both brothers find cause to manhandle him ; both are anxious, for quite different reasons, to get rid of him before "Sir Oliver" arrives. Scene-by-scene examination of the two plays shows that every scene is handled so that it becomes a comic situation.

Witty Dialogue

Behind all these situations must lie the wit of Sheridan's lines. He is almost never just getting on with the play. The quarrel between the Teazles would probably be comic no matter which dramatist wrote it ; in Sheridan's treatment every line is witty. Lady Teazle is therefore a delight to watch, where otherwise she might emerge as a shrew, a hoyden, or simply a stupid woman. Joseph's attempted seduction includes wit of a different order ; hos

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Lady Teazle, and Sheridan are all playing to the audience in a passage that includes many levels of irony. He cannot mean what he says, and she cannot be taken in, yet there is much truth in it. The attempts at seduction would always be comic ; in Sheridan's handling it is much more than that.

Example

It is possible to illustrate with a word how an adequate line is turned into one that has great wit. In *The Rivals* Jack Absolute says, quite correctly, that he doubts whether Lydia would marry him under ordinary circumstances. 'I am by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friend's consent...and the reversion of a good fortune'. The comment would be funny even if 'the impediment of' were omitted, but the inclusion of the words adds greatly. A fortune is no impediment, but it is to Lydia ; but only juvenile notions could make it seem so, nevertheless, at the moment, it is an impediment to Jack's love. A literal and comic line has been made witty, many-edged in its irony.

Satirical Element

Satire is everywhere in Sheridan's plays. It is inherent in plot, character, and lines. Satire may encompass many kinds of material, many attitudes, and many different degrees of intensity. It can be as vicious as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Jonson's *Volpone* ; or it can be more subtle, as in Jane Austen. The objects of satire may vary widely ; they may be individuals, or social manners, or literary forms, or cultural forms. The great point of danger in its use is this, that it cannot be controlled absolutely. Once the tone of a play is satiric, the satire rubs off, as it were, on everything within the play, Sheridan's satire is gentle, but we find it everywhere. His satire attacks people's hypocrisy, and the sentimentalism which was both a cultural norm and a literary convention.

Attack on Sentimentality

If one considers the main characters of both plays together, one finds that the sentimental attitude has been thoroughly dissected. A character such as Faulkland is an attack on excessive sensibility ; but Jack Absolute, the anti-sentimentalist, can also get into trouble. Joseph Surface is an attack on sentimental hypocrisy ; Sir Oliver does not approve of sentimental hypocrisy, but he is certainly a butt of humour. The tyrannical father is satirized in Sir Anthony ; but does Sir Peter, who is really making modest demands, come off much better ? He is so damned charitable that it ruins him financially ; and he continues to be charitable--with other people's money. The usurer is the object of satiric attack, but so is his victim. The erring wife is satirized ; so is the long-suffering husband. Line by line, Sheridan proceeds on his way, dispensing impartial injustice.

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Conclusion

Finally, Sheridan is usually accorded the honour of having written the most witty scenes of social satire in English comedy : the meetings of *The School for Scandal* where reputations fall at every word, where rumours grow before our eyes, and where much of London and the world's society may perhaps recognize itself.

Q. 3. What do you understand by 'sentimental comedy'? Distinguish *The School for Scandal* from such a comedy.

Introductory

The second half of the eighteenth century is associated with sentimentalism both in the novel and in the drama. In the case of the drama especially sentimentalism had a very vitiating influence and marked a decline in the quality of dramatic writing. Sentimentalism in drama involved a reversal of the assumption that the golden mean was always the sound approach. Instead, behaviour was to be judged by the heart, and not the head. It can be argued that out of eighteenth century sentimentalism came nineteenth century humanism, and out of that grew the attitudes by whatever name known, that make us, in our age, attempt to improve the lot of humanity everywhere, even if not always with the success we might wish.

Sentimental Approach

The sentimental approach to human nature was not peculiar to drama. Basic to the sentimental approach was the idea of the innate goodness of man. This idea appeared in all literary forms. It might be associated, for convenience, with Rousseau or with the English philosopher Shaftesbury. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* was a sentimental novel of deliberately confused structure that somehow managed to combine a maximum of ribaldry with a maximum of compassion. Sterne followed with *Sentimental Journey* and Mackenzie followed with *A Man of Feeling*. Jane Austen, generally disapproving, held sentimentalism up for examination in *Pride and Prejudice* and, more obviously in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Characteristics

Sentimentalism in drama, also became associated with a number of other characteristics that were not a necessary part of the philosophy of Shaftesbury or the Romanticism, if we may call it that, of Rousseau. These resulted in changes in all forms of drama ; we shall limit ourselves to comedy.

Reformed Sinner

One of the frequent characters in sentimental drama was the reformed sinner or evil-doer. He was almost always forgiven for

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reasons inherent in the sentimental approach to life. Since man was innately good, the reformation of the thief, the rake, the scoundrel, or the erring wife could be plausible, no matter how unsatisfactory the specific dramatic motivation for reform may have seemed to the more skeptical members of the audience. We must also take into account the dramatist's cast of mind. If he sincerely accepted a sentimental interpretation of human beings, he would be kind to his characters ; he wanted virtue to triumph and he wanted evildoers to reform. Certain kinds of transgressors were somehow prevented by the dramatist from following their own acts to logical conclusions. The most common was the thoughtless woman who was prepared in another famous sentimental phrase, "to stoop to folly". A certain cynicism is necessary to see sexual transgression as a fact in human society even if the transgressor is charming. In sentimental comedy, women almost never actually transgressed, and men very seldom. They were saved by the artificial intervention of the dramatist.

Stock Characters

Certain traditional character types were changed slightly yet definitely, and new stock characters were invented. The cantankerous, tyrannical, and lecherous old man was revealed to have a heart of gold that nobody, including himself, knew about. The woman, constantly angered by an insensitive husband, found sources of strength within herself to resist taking the obvious revenge ; and this nobility led the thoughtless and indifferent husband o love her. Usurers grew kind ; panders were transmogrified into kindly match-makers operating within the approved bonds of matrimony. Seducers retreated before virtue in awed deference to young love, like the devil before the sign of the Cross. For goodness was natural and triumphant.

Doctrine of Sensibility

At the core of sentimental drama at its best and most meaningful lies the doctrine of sensibility. The doctrine of sensibility was also, unfortunately, responsible for what seems to us to be the greatest absurdities in the drama. It involved empathy with the pain and desires of another. It also involved a willingness to suffer oneself, an attitude that some modern psychologists consider an unhealthy masochism. The individual felt other peoples' pain so strongly that he was willing to make great personal sacrifices to spare them and save them from unhappiness. This desire to assume other people's troubles led to occasional absurdities. In one of the most sentimental of plays, Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy*, everybody, wished to sacrifice his own happiness for the same of others, but unfortunately each misread the others' wishes.

Conclusion

In summary, therefore, sentimental drama, growing out of an assumption of the essential goodness of man, by its moral

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lessons by both precept and example, portrayed easy reformation of wrongdoers, and placed great emphasis on pity and self-sacrifice.

Q. 4. Explain what you understand by 'comedy of manners'. How can *The School for Scandal* be called such ?

Introductory

Although the term 'comedy of manners' is often used to describe a style of comedy that would include both Fletcher's *Wild Goose Chase* and Noel Coward's *Design for Living*, the most common use is to characterize a group of English dramatists who wrote after the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660. The best known of this group was William Congreve. There is ample evidence that Sheridan thought of himself as a follower of that great master of comedy. What were the characteristics of the comedy of manners of the Restoration period ?

Comic Element

First, and above all, in contrast to sentimental comedy its primary purpose was to arouse laughter : laughter with the characters, laughter at the characters, laughter at situations, laughter at confusions and embarrassments. That comedy should arouse laughter may seem self-evident, but it is not ; many comedies are comedies only in the sense that a series of unhappy circumstances are resolved into a happy ending.

Satiric Element

The comedy of manners, concerned with the behaviour of people within society, included satiric examination of man as a social creature. The areas of human behaviour satirized varied from mannerisms, affectations, idiosyncracies, eccentricities, and peccadilloes to violent hypocrisies and evils. The tone of the comedies, therefore, sometimes, changed from light and amusing satiric attacks, as in Wycherley's plays *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer*.

Erotic Element

The comedy of manners was concerned with the erotic theme as a form of game or battle between the sexes where, in the main, the characters vied for psychological ascendance over the love adversary. The source of interest was the battle. The lovers were seeking their own pleasure, which, under the circumstances, was best achieved by the gaining and giving of love.

Importance of Money

In an essentially rational and essentially selfish society the complications of the plot were often concerned with money as well as

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love ; the sensible person wanted both. And money, in turn, was frequently equated with parental or guardian approval or disapproval.

Character Types

The comedy of manners included character types, sometimes very important in the play, who were created to portray deviations from the norm of common sense. Fathers were men of irascible tempers, a corruption of the reasonable attitude that fathers have the right and the duty to control their children. Fops were presented as obsessively concerned with clothes, a narcissistic corruption of the reasonable care every man should take of his appearance. Although it was right that old men should try to retain youth, health, and an interest in life, and old man pretending to be a young buck despite graying hair, decayed teeth, and recurrent gout was an obvious corruption of the right attitude. Old women should maintain vigour, care for their appearance, and participate in the life about them so far as health permits, but an obvious corruption of this reasonable attitude was the longing old woman who tried to be a belle and thought that young men pursued her, an old woman with neither common sense nor dignity.

Conclusion

In summary, the approach of the comedy of manners included an acceptance of the golden mean and, in general, a satiric examination of social behaviour that was not in accord with it.

Q. 5. How do you account for the continuous popularity of Sheridan's plays ?

Introductory

Sheridan was not a play-wright by choice yet he proved to be a tremendous success. His story-telling was limpidly clear and his dialogue, while not equal to Congreve's is sheer wit, had the balance and rhythm which is even more effective on the stage. An even greater asset than these was his superb sense of situation. This is exemplified again and again in all three of his plays but it reaches its highest point in the Screen Scene in *The School for Scandal*, probably the most famous single scene in English drama except for the Balcony Scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. It has been said that drama is at its most effective when the audience is in possession of facts which are unknown to the characters on the stage ; and if this is true, the Screen Scene, from the point where Lady Teazle hides until the moment when Sir Peter and Charles Surface, in carefree search of the little French milliner, find her, is a perfect example of dramatic tension and surprise. Another instance, much slighter in its effect but even more startling in its ingenuity, is the scene in *The Critic*

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where Whiskerandos is attacked by the two Uncles and the two Nieces. The stage direction is as follows :

> The two Nieces draw their two daggers to strike Whiskerandos, the two Uncles at the instant with their two swords drawn catch their two Nieces arms and turn the points of their sword to Whiskerandos, who immediately draws two daggers and holds them to the two Nieces bosoms.

Pure Theatre

This is a piece of pure theatre—doubly so, because we here see the theatre burlesquing its own tendency to overemphasize a situation, and doing so in its own particular terms. Literature has nothing to say to it. The appeal is directly to the eye. The effect aimed at is laughter through the purely visual surprise which the spectator feels when the five players swiftly arrange themselves into the absurd group described in the stage direction. The effect having been obtained, Sheridan then feels himself free to extract more fun from it by means of the spoken word, when the complacent Mr. Puff explains to his friend Sneer the beauty of his contrivance :

> There's a situation for you ! There's an heroic group !—you see the ladies can't stab Whiskerandos—he durst not strike them for fear of their Uncles—the Uncles durst not kill him because of their nieces—I have them all at a dead lock !—for everyone of them is afraid to let go first.

Sneer very rightly remarks that in that case they must stand there for ever, but Puff is ready for this too. He brings on a Beefeater :

> Beefeater : In the Queen's name I charge you all to drop your swords and daggers.

Crash go the swords and daggers on the stage ; and a tiny incident, which would never have occurred to the mind of anybody who was not writing directly for an audience, ends to the sound, of inevitable laughter.

Decency

Another cogent reason why Sheridan's plays should have held the stage continuously, while those of more deeply gifted men have suffered total or at best periodic eclipse, is their essential decency. It was his good fortune to live at a period of theatrical history exactly midway between the licentiousness of the Restoration stage and the overdone prudery of the Victorian era. In Sheridan's time it was no longer the fashion to be foulmouthed but no objection was taken to ordinary free speech. As a result the best plays of this time—Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) may serve as another

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striking example—have about them a natural lack of offence combined with an uninhibited gaiety. This combination of qualities has given them a certain universality of appeal to all later generations.

Conclusion

Reasons like these may well serve to explain why producers in search of attractive revivals are always ready to take down Sheridan's works once again from the shelf on which they have never yet been allowed to gather much dust ; but they cannot tell the whole story. Plays do not continue to live through changes of fashion and revolutions in thought such as we have seen in the last century and a half merely because they tell a story well, or because they are neatly carpentered for the stage, or because they reflect youthful high spirits, or because they are fit for family consumption. Some other preservative element is needed and this can only be the author's knowledge of human nature. Nobody can suggest that Sheridan's knowledge went very deep but so far as it did go it was genuine. His characters are very seldom portraits ; as a rule they are gently caricatured. But the stage has a way of being most lifelike when it is a little larger than life, and nearly all Sheridan's people are recognizable types containing their own inner vitality. The reason is that they were all observed directly from life, the sole important exception being Mrs. Malaprop, whom Sheridan borrowed, with improvements from his mother's writings. Because they are not portraits, and because their creator was no more than a lively youth at the time when he brought them into existence, none of these people has very much heart. But it would be unsuitable if they had, for Sheridan's first impulse towards dramatic writing was always satiric ; and in such works any attempt at emotional writing must have developed into sentimentality.

Q. 6. How does Sir Oliver plan to test his two nephews, the profligacy of Charles and the hypocrisy of Joseph ? How does he carry out his plan ?

Sir Oliver in London

Sir Oliver Surface, the uncle of the two brothers, has just arrived in town. Rowley informs him of Sir Peter's marriage. Sir Oliver is inclined to agree with Rowley's judgment of the relative worth of his two nephews.

Sir Oliver's Plan

On the advice of Sir Peter and Rowley, Sir Oliver plans to test his nephews by personal observation of Charles's profligacy and Joseph's sentiment. Rowley knows Moses, a money-lender from whom Charles has borrowed money. As Moses has to introduce another money-lender to Charles, Sir Oliver will now accompany Moses, pretending to be Premium. Sir Oliver then intends to visit Joseph as Mr. Stanley, a distant relative who has lost his money and

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has applied to both brothers for help. After Moses coaches Sir Oliver in the jargon and the behaviour of the money-lender, the new and temporary partnership leaves to visit Charles. Moses and Sir Oliver, as Mr. Premium, arrive at Charles Surface house. Sir Oliver gets his first introduction to the profligate through Trip, Charles's servant. Trip, it seems, is also trying to borrow money from Moses ; he has endorsers, talks about annuities, and is prepared to "insure" his post.

Men's Party

There is a men's party in progress, a luxury which Charles cannot afford. When Moses and Premium enter, they interrupt the drinking and singing, and the guests leave the room. Mr. Premium is not anxious to lend Charles money on the expectation of Sir Oliver's death ; he is, however prepared to buy plate or property. Since family plate and property have already been sold, Charles offers to sell the portraits. They all leave for the picture room.

Auctioneering

The men proceed to the picture room, where Charles first burlesques the part of auctioneer. The selling of individual pictures proves too slow for him, and he starts selling them in batches. Sir Oliver is shocked by the heartlessness of his nephew. However, when they come to the picture of Sir Oliver, painted before he went to India, Charles refuses to sell it. 'I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.' This obviously pleases Sir Oliver. He buys the rest, and leaves.

Charles Helps Stanley

When Rowley enters, Charles immediately gives him the draft (800 pounds) and asks that he change it and take 100 pounds to Stanley for his "wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have some one call that has a better right to the money".

Sir Oliver's Approval

Sir Oliver is very much delighted that his nephew "would not sell my picture". His approval becomes positive enthusiasm for the young man when he discovers that Charles immediately gave some of the money to Stanley. As Moses says : "Ah, there is the pity of it all ; he is so damned charitable."

Joseph is Tested

Then pretending to be Stanley, the poor relation Sir Oliver arrives at Joseph's apartment to test him. Joseph offers no money but a full measure of noble sentiments, which he can apparently call

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up automatically, despite his preoccupation with his own problems. In the course of the conversation, he assures Stanley that Sir Oliver had not been particularly generous but has only sent curios and gifts from India. Sir Oliver leaves, determined that Charles will be his heir. As soon as Stanley leaves, Rowley enters, according to an earlier arrangement, to announce that Sir Oliver is back in the country. Joseph tries to call back "Stanley", but Rowley tells him the old man has already left.

Conclusion

In the last scene of the play, the exposure of Joseph's hypocrisy is completed. Sir Oliver Surface once more comes to see Joseph. Joseph recognizes "Stanley" and is anxious to get rid of him as soon as possible. When Charles enters, he, in turn assumes that Sir Oliver is Premium and is equally anxious to get rid of him before Sir Oliver arrives. When Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, Rowley and Maria enter, it becomes clear who Sir Oliver is. Joseph somehow runs away from the gathering, with the trick'ng of his moral sentiment up to the last drop. Charles and Maria silently agree to marry and a happy Sir Oliver feels, that they should have the wedding "to-morrow".

Q. 7. Sheridan's great comic skill and rather special approach to sentimentalism make his characters different individuals from the traditional types. Discuss with special reference to the major characters in *The School for Scandal.*

Or

Q. 8. "Sheridan's characters appeared under different names in many plays since the Restoration." Do you find any individuality in Sheridan's character-portrayal? Discuss with particular reference to the major characters in *The School for Scandal.*

(1) Charles Surface

Introductory

Broadly speaking it is true that many of the characters in Sheridan's plays are not his own inventions, yet it is equally true that he has succeeded in imparting to them life and individuality : Charles and Joseph Surface show obvious resemblances to Tom Jones and Young Blifil in Fielding's novel, although it might be an overstatement to say that the brothers are based on Fielding. Fielding's Tom Jones displayed a considerable opposition to sentimentalism, but by the time Sheridan wrote *The School for Scandal*, there had developed out of Tom Jones a type that was a fitting addition to the gallery of sentimental portraits. Charles is the outgoing, very human, young man of good heart, generous impulses, human kindliness, and a normal tendency to sow his wild oats and make the mistakes that a young man should be expected to make. The difference between Charles and Tom Jones becomes one of details and emphasis

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Charles's wild oats are rather tame. He is kept from adultery or the spoiling of virgins, and his generous impulses loom large.

Charles is Saved

Charles was recognized by everyone as an extravagant spendthrift. Lady Sneerwell, in the first scene of play, admits that she loves Charles that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation. Sir Peter Teazle obviously feels the characterization is just. We do not meet Charles until Act III, Scene II, and then we discover the limits of the dissipation that Sheridan permitted his hero. Charles is playing host at a men's party, at a time that he is short of money. The device that saves him his uncle's displeasure is a now famous piece of sentimentalism worthy of Cumberland ; he will not sell the picture of his uncle because the old fellow has been very good to me...I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in. This is followed immediately after by a piece of generosity of a highly sentimental variety ; he sends 100 pounds of his new gained funds to Stanley for his wants are pressing, before some one calls that has a better right to the money. Moses summarizes. 'Ah ! there is the pity of it all ; he is so damned charitable'.

Defence of Charles

Sheridan actually chooses to whitewash Charles completely. Tom Jones could never pass up an opportunity offered by any woman, and this is what Sir Peter believes of Charles. But Charles's own comment, already quoted, reveals the difference : "If a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way, and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father--Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your (Joseph's) morality."

Lack of Sensibility

Small incidents hint at a heartier young man. Charles shows some lack of sensibility in the screen scene. When Sir Peter Teazle tells him that Joseph has a little milliner hidden in the apartment, no delicacy inhibits his natural curiosity as he puts aside the screen. When Lady Teazle is revealed, no excessive sympathy prevents his taunting both Sir Peter and his brother.

Conclusion

In brief, Charles is the natural, rather wild, but basically goodhearted young man, but with his wildness carefully controlled by the author so as to display a sentiment and a morality that the latter part of the century found acceptable.

(2) Joseph Surface

Introductory

It is obvious that Joseph Surface is the complete hypocrite, and the difference is not between sentimentalism and realism but between

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genuine sentiment and hypocrisy. Examination of the play, however, reveals, that Joseph is not a very successful hypocrite. Sir Peter Teazle is, in fact, the only person who is taken in by him. It is his repeated characterization of Surface that gives the impression of successful hypocrisy,..." 'Tis edification to hear him converse ; he professes the noblest sentiments. Your brother (*i.e.* Charles) has no sentiment, you never hear him talk so, and again, What a difference there is between you, What noble sentiments." He is a man of sentiment. But Joseph does not deceive anyone else. Lady Sneerwell has seen through him completely, and they are now colleagues in conspiracy, Maria is not taken in, he never succeeded in fooling Rowley, and he does not manage to deceive Sir Oliver for even a short time.

Love of Money

Traditionally a character fulfilling Joseph's role would, among other villainous characteristics, display an illicit lust. Although it would have been simple to incorporate such motives into Joseph's attitudes to both Maria and Lady Teazle Sheridan did not see fit to do so. Joseph's major vice is a love of money. He has, apparently, no love, licit or illicit, for Maria ; he only wants to marry an heiress. And his affair with Lady Teazle is accounted for in terms quite different from lust—'I wanted, at first only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle that she might not be my enemy with Maria ; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover'. He makes a real attempt to seduce Lady Teazle only because he is afraid of her reactions when she discovers that he wishes to marry Maria but she must by no means be let into that secret—'at least, till I have her more in my power'. His motives, therefore, are simply economic.

Hypocrisy

As a conspirator he is not effective, the plan in the fifth act is not a very good one, and it fails. Finally, we know of most of his villainy only because it is made clear that he is a villain. What is displayed amply is conscious hypocrisy and avarice.

Characterization

In the play, characterization includes the interpretation of the role on stage. As this differs from actor to actor even from performance to performance, much of the characterization is beyond the dramatist's control. The dramatist, however, does supply ample clues to indicate how he wants the part to be played, these are our legitimate concern when analysing the published play. A too casual reading of the screen scene may result in our missing the full flavour of Sheridan's creation and in our thinking of the screen scene as one in which villainy is frustrated, without realizing the extent of the comedy is Joseph's role.

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Comic Villain

Joseph is a comic villain and his attempts to juggle an increasingly complicated situation are comic. As he begins his siege of Lady Teazle's virtue, he is a detached, objective technician. Passion is not a part of his temperament. But Lady Teazle is a very attractive young woman. As he seems about to achieve some success, he loses his detachment and becomes an obviously passionate young man and a little more human in the process. At just the point when he expects to gain his now double ends, seduction for its own sake and seduction for power, Sir Peter is announced. Joseph's frustration in the scramble to hide Lady Teazle may be played as broadly as the actor and director may wish and as current taste may sanction.

Comic Frenzy

In the conversation with Sir Peter, Joseph reveals increasing comic frenzy as Sir Peter examines the screen and then proceeds blandly to destroy the structure of deceit his host has so carefully built. Joseph's discomfort reaches a second plateau as Charles is announced. Sir Peter wants to hide behind the screen, but just barely catches a glimpse of a woman's skirt before he is pushed into a closet. With Teazles precariously screened and closeted, Joseph barely maintains some self-control as Charles proceeds to complete the destruction which Sir Peter started. Before Joseph tells his brother, in desperation, that Sir Peter is in the closet, he has frantically tried in speech and pantomime to get his unobservant guest to stop talking. Charles, of course, notices nothing because his heart is pure. By the time Lady Teazle is discovered, Joseph is perhaps near to tears, a frustrated, dishevelled, and exhausted young man.

Conclusion

For the audience, Joseph is now a comic figure, Sheridan has prevented any possibility that his villain will lend a quality of dread to a light, although satiric, comedy.

Q. 9 Couples like the Teazles have appeared many times in English Comedy. Do you find any difference in Sheridan's delineation of these characters ? Discuss.

Or

Q. 10. Write briefly on the Teazle couple in *The School for Scandal*.

Introductory

The observation about Sheridan's lack of inventive genius in the field of characterisation is especially applicable to the Teazle couple. Couples like the Teazles have appeared many times in English comedy. The most famous are Mr. and Mrs. Pinchwife in

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Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. Teazle and Pinchwife are older men ; both ladies are country wives. Some of the differences between the Teazles and the Pinchwifes could be attributed simply to the fact that they appear in different plays written by different playwrights. Other differences are inherent in Sheridan's special kind of sentimentalism.

The Teazles

In the first scene between the Teazles Sheridan is at his comic best in handling a situation and dialogue. The two are battling as equals. Lady Teazle does not try to trick him, sneak out of the house, or disguise herself. Sir Peter does not lie or try to keep her in country innocence. The advantage Lady Teazle has is this—that Sir Peter loves her and she does not, at this point, love him.

(1) Sir Peter Teazle

Man of Sentiment

The middle aged man who marries a young wife is, in drama, doomed to be perpetually concerned about his wife's faithfulness, and he has only himself to blame. In addition Sir Peter is the man who is always wrong in his judgment of the brothers. He is the admirer of sentiment.

Sympathy and Understanding

Unlike his Restoration prototypes, Sir Peter does not make any attempt to keep his wife from knowledge of London society life ; he is far more prepared to trust her virtue and her good sense. His basic approach is to win her with kindness ; instead of punishing her, he will give her the allowance she wants. His feeling for her is a blend of love and affection, and a kind of fatherly understanding. In sum his character is changed from the traditional lecherous, suspicious old man into a something far more commendable.

(2) Lady Teazle

Introductory

Traditionally the country miss who marries an older man is a hoyden. Lady Teazle, when we meet her, is well beyond this point. She has become a very charming, very lovely young woman who has taken her place in London society. She is, of course completely intoxicated with city life, clothes, visiting, and gossip—all activities that she did not learn at home. Up to a point, her affair with Joseph Surface moves along the expected path, she is flattered by the attentions of a worldly and handsome young man. But she is not naive enough to succumb. When she perhaps might, the spirit of the times and the goodwill of the author conspire to preserve her virtue.

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Instrument of Wit

Lady Teazle, has, in addition, a quality of her own that keeps her from being just one more country miss in English comedy. As the scene with Sir Peter indicates, she has a personality and a will. The basic reason is clear—she is one of the most important vehicles for Sheridan's wit. Without her daily jangle with Sir Peter, this would be a duller play.

The Screen Scene

Although Sheridan has supplied Lady Teazle with lines enough to create a character complete, a great deal must still depend on the way this part is played, especially in the Screen Scene. The first problem of interpretation is this : is Lady Teazle moving toward succumbing to Joseph's blandishments ? Can she be taking seriously his paradoxical argument that ladies who slip slightly have the best reputations. And if she is shown as moving toward surrender, is she then convinced ? Or is she actually aware that the argument is specious but is accepting it because the idea of an adventure with a sophisticated young man fascinates her ? If the correct interpretation is the last, she becomes a complex comic character, laughing at her lover and herself at the time that she accedes, or is ready to accede, to his villainy. In all cases, she is the young lady playing with fire and we must feel delighted that she does not get burnt.

Q. 11. "Ah ! there is the pity of it all ; he is so damned charitable !" Does this line appear to you to be highly ironical ? Discuss while writing a sketch of the character of Moses.

Or

Q. 12. Does Sheridan intend any kind of burlesque on the character of Moses, the Jew ?

Introductory

The character of Moses needs some comment. It is probable that many Jews were money-lenders. It is unlikely that Sheridan intended the broadest kind of burlesques here, although the stage tradition is that Moses used a canting speech.

Interpretation

In interpreting the role, the actor has decisions to make for which there is no certain guide in the lines. Does Sheridan intend Moses to have some realization of Charles's sterling worth ? Such an insight would not prevent the money-lender from pursuing his regular trade, but it would provide opportunity for a great deal of meaningful business, especially when Moses helps Charles lie about his prospects and helps Sir Oliver lie about himself. He would display chagrin when

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Charles does the wrong thing, he would attempt to cut him off as he talks about the uncle, and he would display some delight as Charles finally stumbles on the exactly right thing to do.

Irony

Sheridan would not have passed up so valid an opportunity to heighten the comedy. In addition, one important line, quoted before, would become more meaningful. Moses' line—Ah! there is the pity of it all ; he is so damned charitable—is a highly ironic line even if Moses is completely oblivious to the implications of the observation. If Moses does have mixed feelings about Charles, however, then the irony is considerably enriched by his awareness that Charles's vice is also his virtue, and he finds that he disapproves and admires at the same time.

Satiric Function

Sheridan also uses Moses for satiric attack on the Christian money-lender. Sir Oliver can play the part of Mr. Premium, for Mr. Premium is Christian—and it would not be amiss for him to ride up in his own carriage. At the same time, Charles Surface or even Trip can think of himself as superior to the money-lender, who is actually in every way the more solid member of society.

Q. 13. Who are the scandal-mongers ? Write short notes on their characters.

Or

Q. 14. How does each of the scandal-mongers set the theme for *The School for Scandal* ?

Lady Sneerwell

Lady Sneerwell's part is somewhat unsatisfactory, probably because of the history of the composition of the play. She is barely shown as scheming, and her fifth act appearance is weak. Her most important function in the play, as it stands, is to set the theme for *The School for Scandal* : that wit depends upon some malice. *The Slanderers* supplies the information needed to understand what her part was first intended to be before it was considerably cut. She was a machinating villainess, with the typical inadequate justification, 'Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.' She actually manipulated Maria (her ward) and Clerimont (Charles) to try to win Charles for herself and to palm off Maria on Sir Benjamin Crabtree (changed into two characters in the combined, final version).

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Snake

Like Lady Sneerwell, Snake suffered in the process of the composition of the final play. His part was reduced; a scene of confrontation with Rowley was deleted. He belongs to the long tradition of tool villains, but is a rather weak one. Like everyone else in the play, he has good lines.

The Chorus

With Lady Sneerwell, the characters Mrs. Candour Crabtree, and Sir Benjamin Backbite form the slanderers' club, *The School for Scandal*. They are not characterized beyond their ticket names, and they need not be. All their speeches show the characteristics described by their names. Their scenes are by many considered to be the wittiest in English comedy.

Q. 15. Write briefly on the plot-construction of *The School for Scandal*.

Or

Q. 16. *The School for Scandal* **has several strands in its construction and all are carefully and neatly woven. Discuss.**

Introductory

In spite of the fact that Sheridan's comedies were written at a very young age they reveal a remarkable mastery of the art of plot-construction.

Construction

The construction of the play is excellent. It has several strands and all are carefully and neatly woven together. Joseph Surface is to be exposed for what he is a sententious selfish humbug. His plot to marry Maria for her money is to be foiled. Charles Surface is to be rescued from his foolish extravagance, and happily married to Maria. To expose the one nephew and redeem the other from his bankrupt ways, Sir Oliver Surface is introduced and with the help of Rowley, poses first as a money-lender and next as a poor relation. So Charles is shown to have his good points as well as bad, and Joseph to be a whited sepulchre.

The Teazles

To work out this would have been fairly straight-forward dramatic work, but Sheridan has also the Teazles to deal with. He links them with this other matter, first by making Sir Peter and Sir Oliver old friends, with Rowley as a friend in common next by making Joseph play up to Lady Teazle in order to prevent her

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guessing and opposing his designs on Maria, with the result that he is led into a real intrigue with her. This fitted in perfectly with Sheridan's aim of presenting the comedy of the old bachelor newly wedded to a young, fashionable wife, and consequently the irritated victim of love and jealousy. At the same time, it opened the way for the final exposure of Joseph not only as the man whose charity is all words, but as the man of dishonour whose noble sentiments easily give way on occasion to the logic of a seducer.

Element of Scandal

Then, in addition to all this, Sheridan means to expose the dire effects of scandal. So there enter at the very beginning Lady Sneerwell and Snake. Soon comes Joseph Surface to link this matter both with the Teazle theme and with the plot in which his uncle is the chief actor. Further, Lady Sneerwell has a vain passion for Charles, and Snake, the go-between of the scandal-mongers, is to be used to further the schemes of Joseph and Lady Sneerwell. Again, all is neatly dove-tailed together. But the scandal element serves a much larger purpose than that of mere plot. It gives that unity of atmosphere which welds all the various elements of the play together far more indivisibly than can any plot structure, however neat. The result is a harmony of scandal and cross purposes, with the constant wit lighting everything up. In fact, the title of the play is fully justified. Take out the scandal element, and a play of a quite different tone would result; and, because this is so, Sheridan has given the scandalous college, and its president, Lady Sneerwell, a great deal of scope which the plot itself does not demand, as in the talk in Act I : Scene i, and Act II : Scene ii, much of which does not advance the plot at all, though the lying scandal about Lady Teazle and Charles is relevant. Finally, the scandalous college is justified by the light thrown on their characters by Sir Peter's and Maria's contempt for scandal, and by Lady Teazle's reaction, when she sees where such talk leads.

Mastery of Stage-Craft

As well as fulfilling thus all the requirements of plot and atomsphere, Sheridan shows himself a master of stage-craft. A play may be good in such matters as we had considered, and still be weak on the stage. But the way in which Sheridan brings on his characters, arranges the moments of their entries and exits, and their overlapping on the stage, and makes the most of his few incidents, such as the encounter with Charles's drinking party and the auction of the portraits, reveals very effective stage-craft. The climax in the screen scene is a heightened and sustained instance of this skill.

Conclusion

Some, almost driven to find fault by the very perfection of the play, have suggested that the last act is superfluous, but it is rather an added satisfaction to have all rounded off happily with fresh satire on

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the rumours of scandal and with the delightful last use of Snake, afraid of being credited with a good action.

Q. 17. Write a short essay on Sheridan's characterization in *The School for Scandal*.

Introductory

Sheridan's characterisation is determined by his kind of play. The witty comedy of manners relies so much on sparkling dialogue as much on the comic possibilities of plot and circumstance and clash of character that detailed and original characterisation is not called for. Nor was it in Sheridan's nature to supply it. His originality lay in his brilliant handling of fairly commonplace theatrical material, so that various things that had been at times done very well before were by him done all at once and excellently well, and in a way that seems surprisingly fresh and spirited.

Vivid Types

So, in characterisation, types vividly suggested are on the whole enough to his purpose. Such are Mrs. Candour, who with a very gross affection of good nature and benevolence...does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree. Snake with not virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy, and Sir Benjamin Backbite, his conversation a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance. They all live and speak up to their names, and remind us of the characterisation in Ben Jonson's early seventeenth century comedy of humours, out of which the comedy of manners gradually grew. They are human figures, but observed by the dramatist only in one aspect.

Comic Types

The more fully drawn characters are also stock types of comedy. They had a long ancestry on the stage, and their modern counterparts are with us still. Thus we have Sir Oliver Surface, the good-natured wealthy guardian, unexpectedly returned from India, a shrewd, peppery, but slightly sentimental old fellow, who has been a gay spark in his youth and who is therefore determined to like his jovial nephew and detest his sober one, for he hates to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth : in all that there was little new. The stage had long grown accustomed to such a character's entering the life of a reckless or wicked young man for his good. He brought in the sentimental element beloved by eighteenth century (and later) audiences, and Sheridan so far complied with the type as not to omit a fair share of sentiment in the use he makes of Sir Oliver's portrait.

Examples

Again, in Sir Peter Teazle we meet a familiar figure—the old bachelor, jealous of a young wife, his temper teased and fretted by her provocative extravagance, and by his awareness of what

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his friends and acquaintances are saying. The quite stock type would rage and growl more than Sir Peter does, and Sheridan here too, in a play which makes abundant fun of the man of sentiment is not afraid to indulge in true sentiment by suggesting the real love Sir Peter has for Lady Teazle and goodwill and understanding which bring them together. Rowley, of course, is the typical staid warm-hearted former servant. Maria is the level-headed attractive heroine, who has little to do but make the hero happy by marriage and show up the malicious and extravagant by contrast. Charles Surface, no man's enemy but his own, is the very essence of all such heroes, whose high spirits and good nature win the hearts of the audience as well as that of their beloved. Satire and wit do not permit much romantic love to share a play with them, but this spice of it, together with the hints of sentiment we have just noticed, serves to take away any hardness from this sparkling comedy.

Outstanding Characters

The outstanding characters are Joseph Surface and Lady Teazle, in portraying both of whom Sheridan shows that indefinable something extra, which marks the greater dramatist. Joseph Surface detestable as he is, is exposed so humorously that we can hardly detest him ; his exposure seems sufficient punishment. The artful, selfish, and malicious hypocrite has become proverbial as the type of mean duplicity sheltering behind an air of irreproachable virtue and a conversation larded with admirable sentiments. He is a sleek looking rogue ; the complaisance of his features fills Sir Oliver with mistrust ; and what noble sentiments ! At the outset Lady Sneerwell tells Snake and us his real character, and thus we are so provoked to enjoy his villainy that we look on him as a work of art, and accept the improbability of so thorough a humbug, whom, when his subtlety over-reaches itself, even Lady Sneerwell has to reproach for such an avarice of crimes.

Lady Teazle

Lady Teazle is always compared to Congreve's Millamant in *The Way of the World* (1700), a sparkling woman who anticipated her in hating the country and loving the town and its fashions. She is no mere country bred girl aping the fashionable. She has a way with her. Sir Peter confesses she has as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass plot out of Grosvenor Square. He has to go to her, for what a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has. No doubt she is foolishly extravagant, too ready to join in what she thinks innocent scandal, too provoking to her husband, too foolish in listening to a Platonic lover taken for fashion's sake. But there is no real harm in her, and she fully makes amends when she recovers her senses and insists on telling the truth to shame Joseph. And, after all, Sir Peter was provoking too. To convey her elegance, charm, folly and honesty is no small task for an actress, but Sheridan has given her all the help a dramatist can.

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Q. 18. "The construction of the play, *The School for Scandal*, shows Sheridan's astonishing instinct for a striking situation." Discuss with suitable examples from the play.

Introductory

The construction of the play shows Sheridan's astonishing instinct for a striking situation. Two such scenes will immediately occur to the mind of the reader, the great Screen Scene, and that in which Charles Surface sells his family portraits. The first is incomparably the greater of the two, and one which has rarely been equalled on the stage. The succession of interviews, one after another, has not a word too much ; nor could the most impatient audience find any sameness of repetition in the successive arrivals, each one of which adds an embarrassment to the dilemma of Joseph Surface, and helps to clear up those of his victims. As the imbroglio grows before our eyes, and every door of escape for the hypocrite is shut up without even the common sentimental error of awakening commiseration for him, the most matter-of-fact spectator can scarcely repress, even when carried along by the interest of the story, a sensation of admiring wonder at the skill with which all these combinations are effected. It is less tragic than Tartuffe, in so much as Orgon's profound belief, and the darker guilt of the domestic traitor, move us more deeply and it is not terrible like the unveiling of Iago ; but neither is it trivial, as the ordinary discoveries of deceitful wives and friends to which we are accustomed on the stage so generally are ; and the fine art with which Sir Peter, something of an old curmudgeon in the earlier scenes, is made unexpectedly to reveal his better nature, and thus prepare the way, unawares, for the re-establishment of his own happiness at the moment when it seems entirely shattered, is worthy of the highest praise. It would no doubt have been higher art, could the dramatist have deceived his audience as well as the personages of the play, and made us also parties in the surprise of the discovery. But this is what no one has as yet attempted, not even Shakespeare, and we have no right to object to Sheridan that we are in the secret of Joseph's baseness all the time, just as we are in the secret of Tartuff's, and can with difficulty understand how it is that he deceives any one. There remains for the comedy of the future a still greater achievement—that of inventing an Iago who shall deceive the audience as well as the Othello upon whom he plays, and be found out only by us and our hero at the same moment. Probably could such a thing be done, the effect would be too great, and the indignation and horror of the crowd, thus skilfully excited, produce a sensation beyond that which is permissible to fiction. But Sheridan does not deal with any tragical powers. Nothing deeper is within his reach than the momentary touch of real feeling with which Lady Teazle vindicates herself, and proves her capacity for better things. The gradual development of the situation, the unwilling agency of the deceiver in opening the eyes and touching the heart of the woman he hopes to seduce, and clearing the character of the brother whom he desires to incriminate ; the confusion of his [illegible] dangerous

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elements come together ; the chuckling malice of the old man eager half to exonerate Joseph from the charge of austerity, half to betray his secret, little suspecting how nearly his own credit is involved ; the stupefying dismay of the disclosure ; are managed with the most complete success. The scene is in itself a succinct drama quite comprehensible even when detached from its context and of the highest effectiveness. So far as morals are concerned it is harmless as any equivocal situation can be. To be sure the suggestion of the little milliner is no more savoury than the presence of Lady Teazle is becoming to her reputation and duty ; but the utter confusion of the scheme, and the admirable and unexpected turn given to the conclusion by her genuine perception of her folly and her husband's merit, go so far as is possible to neutralise all that is amiss in it. There had been a temporary doubt as to whether *The Rivals* would catch the public fancy ; there was none at all about this.

Auction Scene

The other great scene, that in which Charles Surface sells his pictures, has qualities of a different kind. It is less perfect and more suggestive than most of Sheridan's work. We have to accept the favourite type of the stage hero—the reckless, thoughtless, warm hearted, impressionable, spendthrift, as willing to give as he is averse to pay, scattering his wild oats by handfuls, wasting his life and his means in riotous living, yet easily touched. This character, whatever moralists may say, always has, and probably always will retain a favoured place in fiction. Though we know very well that in real life dissipation does not keep the heart soft or promote gratitude and other generous sentiments, yet we are still willing to believe that riotous youth whose animal spirits carry him away into devious paths is at bottom better than the demure one who keeps his peccadilloes out of sight of the world. The eighteenth century had no doubt on the subject. Charles Surface is the light-hearted prodigal whose easy vices have brought him to the point of destruction. Whatever grave thoughts on the subject he may have within he is resolute in carrying out his gay career to the end, and ready to laugh in the face of ruin. A more severe taste might consider his light-heartedness swagger, and his generosity prodigality ; but we are expected on the stage to consider such characteristics as far more frequently conjoined with a good heart than sobriety and decency. The reckless young reprobate at the lowest ebb of his fortune, ready to throw away anything or everything and exposing himself hopelessly and all his follies to the rich uncle who has come to test him conciliates our good opinion from the beginning by the real kindness with which he protects little Premium, the supposed money-lender, from the rude pleasantries of his boon companions. The touch of desperation which is in his gaiety without ever finding expression in words enhances the effect of his headlong talk and wild wit. When his companion Careless, to whom it is all a good joke, complains,—"Charles, I haven't a hammer ; and what's an auctioneer without a hammer? The master of the ruined house clutches with a laugh at the family pedigree, firmly and tightly encircling its roller

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and throws that to him ; "Here, Charles, you shall have no common bit of mahogany ; here's the family tree for you, and you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree," he cries. Such a laugh raises echoes which we wonder whether Sheridan contemplated or had any thought of. As the prodigal rattles on with almost too much swing and way upon him in the tragic comedy of fate, we are hurried along in the stream of his wild gaiety with sympathy which he has no right to. The audience is all on his side from the first word. Sir Oliver is a weak-headed old gentleman, not at all equal to Sir Peter, and is overcome with ludicrous ease and rapidity ; but the obstinacy of affectionate gratitude with which the hot-headed young fellow holds by the portrait of his benefactor, and the fine superiority with which he puts all "little Premium's," overtures aside, without putting on any newborn virtue or pretensions to amendment, are in their way a masterpiece. He pretends no admiration for the distant uncle, but speaks of him as freely as of the other sacrificed ancestors. The little ill looking fellow over the settee evokes no sentiment from him. He is quite willing to draw a post obit upon Sir Oliver's life, and to jest at him as a little nabob with next to no liver. But for all that, a sort of impudent fidelity, a reckless gratitude, is in the ruined prodigal. They equal him in all his folly with the indifference of an unconcerned bystander, the wondering contempt of the Jew, the concealed and somewhat maudlin emotion of the once indignant uncle, surround the figure of the swaggering gallant with the most felicitous background. It is far less elaborate and complicated than the companion scene ; but it is scarcely less successful.

Q. 19. Describe in your own words the famous "Screen-scene" in *The School for Scandal*.

Introductory

The Screen-scene in *The School for Scandal* has justly become famous as one of the most outstanding in English comedy. In Joseph's library, Lady Teazle arrives for a clandestine and indiscreet meeting. It is clear that this is not her first visit. When Joseph's attempt at seduction is interrupted by the arrival of her husband, Lady Teazle hides behind a screen.

Sir Peter

Sir Peter talks first of his concern that his wife may be having an affair with Charles. Then he announces that he intends to make her an independent allowance, since money is so often the cause of their arguments. Next he discusses Joseph's suit of Maria ; Sir Peter does not understand why Joseph wants to keep this a secret from Lady Teazle. All this time Joseph is trying to change the conversation to some safe subject. To add to the confusion, Charles is announced, and Sir Peter wants to hide so as to hear whatever Charles might say about Lady Teazle. Before Joseph gets him into the closet, Sir Peter sees a bit of a lady's skirt behind the screen ; he does not see the lady.

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Charles is Cleared

Charles also seems to pick unfortunate subjects for conversation. He discusses the fact that he thinks Lady Teazle has shown some partiality to Joseph. In desperation Joseph reveals the fact that Sir Peter is hidden in the closet, and Charles immediately calls him out. On the basis of the conversation, Sir Peter is convinced that Charles has not been having an affair with his wife.

Lady Teazle Revealed

The servant comes in to tell Joseph that someone is waiting to see him below. When Joseph leaves the room, Sir Peter cannot resist telling Charles that there is a "little French milliner" hidden behind the screen. Charles insists on "unveiling" her, and Lady Teazle is revealed just as Joseph returns. After some biting remarks, Charles leaves.

Joseph's Story

Joseph concocts a story of Lady Teazle's coming to talk about his pretensions to Maria, but Lady Teazle refuses to support him. Impressed by the kindness Sir Peter intended to show, she tells him the truth.——"I come——at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness."

Q. 20. Narrate briefly the subject-matter of the first act of the play, *The School for Scandal*.

Introductory

Lady Sneerwell is in conversation with Snake, whom she employs to spread scandalous information about people of the town. In the conversation these points emerge : that she knows that Joseph Surface, the elder brother, believed to be a highly admirable person, is actually a hypocrite and that Charles Surface, his younger brother, gives the impression of being a libertine. She is working with Joseph Surface, however to try to break up Charles and Maria's love, for she wants Charles herself and Joseph Surface hopes to woo and win Maria.

Charles in Trouble

When Joseph Surface enters, the conspirators discuss Charles's affairs. Charles is in considerable financial distress and Lady Sneerwell expects his circumstances to worsen ; then the need for money will bring the spendthrift to her arms. Joseph regrets that she has confided their secret to Snake, for he does not believe Snake trustworthy in his villainy.

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The Party

The party begins to assemble. Maria enters ; with Mrs. Candour's entrance the vicious gossip grows ; the party is swelled by two malicious men, Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite. When Maria feels she can stand no more malice directed at the man she loves, she leaves. The company then breaks up.

Conclusion

Sir Peter Teazle enters to deplore the general unhappiness of his married state, for he, an old bachelor, married a young wife ; even worse, he still loves her. Rowley enters and we learn that he and Sir Peter do not agree about the two brothers ; Sir Peter believes Joseph to be a fine and noble person and Charles a disreputable rake. Rowley is apparently more perspicacious. We also learn that Sir Oliver Surface, the uncle of the brother has arrived in London from India.

Q. 21. Write a note on the structure of *The School for Scandal*.

Or

Q. 22. What is the underlying point in the theme of *The School for Scandal* ?

Or

Q. 23. Point out how the two plots of *The School for Scandal* are linked together.

Or

Q. 24. "There is rather more plot in *The School for Scandal* than in most of the comedies of manners". Explain and justify.

Or

Q. 25. A close examination of the play shows that there are in fact three plots in *The School for Scandal*. Discuss.

Introductory

The School for Scandal is a very skilfully constructed play. It has two separate plots which are linked together through the Teazles. This is because Lady Teazle is the protegee of the slanderers, whereas Lord Teazle is guardian of the brothers. The first plot is enacted at Sneerwell's Academy, while the scene of the second is the picture gallery of Charles Surface. An adjunct of the former scene is Joseph's library, while to the second may be added Sir Peter's home. The link between the characters is further strengthened by various go-betweens. Lady Sneerwell [redacted] Surface ; Charles has Rowley, and

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Lady Teazle has Maria. Sir Oliver helps to join the Surface plot with that of Sir Peter, and Maria links it with Lady Sneerwell and Lady Teazle.

Compared With Other Comedies

There is no exaggeration in the comment that this play has more of plot than is usual in the typical comedies of manners. Even the parts where the action seems to stand still are not without significance, because they help to bring out better the characters of the main figures in the action. It is even possible to find three rather than two plots in the play : "A close examination of the play will show that there are in fact three plots—one, the marital relations of Peter and his lady ; secondly, the loves of Charles and Maria ; and thirdly, the arrival of Sir Oliver and his discovery of the true character of Joseph. One might almost add a fourth—Lady Sneerwell's attempt to secure Charles for himself. All these are cleverly dovetailed into one another by the agency of the arch hypocrite Joseph who is equally at home in Sir Peter's house and in the company of Lady Sneerwell : Joseph is courting Maria ; Joseph is making love to Lady Teazle ; Joseph is plotting with Lady Sneerwell ; Joseph is playing the false friend to Sir Peter ; Joseph's finger is in every pie. And withal he serves Sheridan's moral purpose of holding up to public scorn the 'man of sensibility' so much esteemed by the ladies of Sheridan's time."

Opening Scene

In the opening scene Snake and Lady Sneerwell acquaint us with the existing situation of affairs : Lady Sneerwell and Joseph are in league because Joseph desires Maria and her fortune, but Maria is in love with Charles whom Lady Sneerwell herself covets. Sir Peter Teazle, who seems to specialize in guardianship, is Maria's guardian and has in the past held the same responsibility to the two Surfaces until their uncle Sir Oliver's liberality gave them an early independence. Sir Oliver has now returned from India after an absence of fifteen years and, desirous of judging for himself the real characters of his nephews (and pensioners) plans to visit, Charles in the character of Little Premium a broker, and Joseph in that of a needy relative named Stanley. Charles is revealed as both grateful and generous, Joseph as mean and hypocritical with the result that uncle Oliver's sympathy and, we may assume fortune are enlisted on Charles's side in the brothers' contest for Maria. In the interim Joseph has endeavoured to forward his suit of Maria by ingratiating himself with her guardian's wife who, being a trifle feather-brained, appreciates a mild flirtation and since she is in reality an inexperienced country girl, assumes that Joseph's love making is a tribute to her own charms. Sir Peter inopportunely visits his friend Joseph when Lady Teazle is in his room and Joseph puts the lady behind a screen, from which point of vantage she hears her husband refer to Joseph's offer for Maria's hand and is disillusioned. Another unwelcome visitor in the person of Charles arrives at this point and

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after a little more hide and seek with Sir Peter, Charles hearing that a little milliner is behind the screen, throws it down and reveals—Lady Teazle. Of course Joseph has an explanation and of course Lady Teazle, her eyes being opened to his deceit, gives him the lie direct and is reconciled to her husband whose intended generosity to herself she had overheard.

Joseph in Trouble

Joseph is now deeply in trouble. He tries his best to coin out excuses so as to extricate himself. Lady Teazle now thinks much better of her husband and is reconciled to him. Joseph makes one more attempt to divide Maria and Charles by coming with a concocted story that Charles is entangled with Lady Sneerwell, but the intended witness, Snake, finds it more profitable to tell the truth. Thus Joseph stands completely exposed and Sir Oliver declares that Charles is his chosen nephew. The play ends with Joseph and Lady Sneerwell going off together. As they depart, Sir Oliver has a jest at their expense : "Aye, and marry her, Joseph, if you can—oil and vinegar, egad."

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Chronology of Important Dates

1751	Sheridan born.
1773	Married Elizabeth Ann Linley.
1775	*The Rivals* ; *St. Patrick's Day* ; *The Duenna.*
1776	Acquired Garrick's share in Drury Lane Theatre.
1777	Produced *A Trip to Scarborough* and *The School for Scandal.*
1779	*The Critic.*
1780	Returned to Parliament.
1787	Made his great speech against Warren Hastings.
1788	Another celebrated speech.
1794	His new theatre opened.
1799	*Pizarro.*
1806-7	Treasurer of the Navy in the Ministry "of all the talents".
1809	Sheridan's theatre destroyed by fire.
1813	Arrested for debt.
1816	Died. Received a great public funeral.

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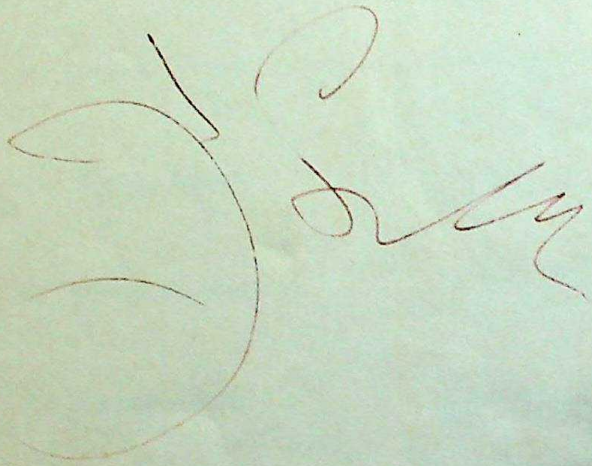

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The School for Scandal

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